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A FAMILY HISTORY.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“THE QUEEN’S PARDON.”

“For his rule over his family, and for his conduct to wife and children—subjects over whom his power is monarchical any one who watches the world must think with trembling sometimes of the account he will have to render. For in our society there is no law to control the King of the Fireside. He is master of property, happiness—life almost. He is free to punish, to make happy or unhappy, to ruin or to torture.”

“When the annals of each little reign are shewn to the Supreme Master under whom men hold sovereignty, histories will be laid bare of household tyrants as cruel as Amurath, as savage as Nero, and as reckless and dissolute as Charles.”

THACKERAY’S “ESMOND.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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A FAMILY HISTORY.

CHAPTER I.

INDIVIDUALS exist in the world who, having parents, brothers, and sisters, yet seem without kin; mere waifs and strays cast up by the ocean of life, whom no one cares to own or claim. Such a one was I.

Yet now that life draws near its close, I would not have exchanged the lot appointed me for any other. If my morning was dark, cold, and dreary, like many such dawns, it heralded a noonday of clear, calm, temperate sunshine, overcast by no clouds, darkened by no thunderstorms, and I trust that like such days it will also end in peace.

My first recollection is of the advent of a baby brother, and of playing about in my mo-

ther's sick room. I believe I was noisy and unquiet—what healthy child of two years old is otherwise? Not the little one who trots about this house, playing her tricks of childish mischief, and chattering from morning till night, reproved rather by kisses and caresses than harsh words, and growing up in an atmosphere of love.

But *I* was pronounced a playing, tiresome child, and I was sent from home to the house of my bachelor uncle. He spoiled me to my heart's content, if tenderness and indulgence, which exercise a softening influence over the character for life, can be called spoiling. My parents said it was, and accordingly took me home in less than two years. I had been but a very short time at home, when my aunt Joan came to our house on a visit. She decided that my parents mismanaged me, and desired that I might be given up to her. She could not take me with her when she departed, for she had a round of other visits to pay. My father and I were to follow her to Lonsdale.

I was very happy on this journey. I liked to look out of the stage-coach windows, and see the houses and fields and hedges all running along, while we sat still. My father told me I was mistaken, that it was we who were moving, while the fields and hedges remained in their places; but I found it very difficult to believe him.

Then, when evening began to close in, and the light faded, and everything became hazy and indistinct, and my eyes grew heavy, papa took me on his knee more kindly and caressingly than usual, and let me nestle my weary little head against him, and fall fast asleep.

The rattling of the coach-wheels over a stone pavement woke me up, to see streets of tall houses that seemed to have no end, the glare and glitter of innumerable lamps; to hear a confused noise of carts, and carriages, and voices, and the tramp of thousands of feet. We were in London. The coach stopped; my father lifted me out, carried me into a house, and consigned me to a woman he called "chamber-maid," by whom I was undressed and put to bed.

When I awoke next morning and saw the dark moreen curtains, instead of the nice little white bed in which I slept at home with my brother, and the room full of what I thought smoke—but know now must have been a London fog—through which the posts of the huge bed, and the tables and chairs, all loomed dim and indistinct, and put out my hand to feel for my brother, and found he was not there, a feeling of strangeness and desolation came over me, and I began to cry bitterly. My sobs wakened my father, who was sleeping beside me, but whom in the murky atmosphere I had

not recognized, and rather believe I had taken for one of the wicked giants who figured in the fairy tales my uncle Charles had been used to tell me.

“What’s the matter, Elizabeth?”

The well-known voice re-assured me. Then came a new fear; he would whip me for crying, and I could not stop all at once.

“What’s the matter, little one?”

The voice sounded so unusually kind, that I found heart to say, “I want to go home, and I want my brother.”

“But you know Elizabeth and papa are taking a journey together. You liked going in the coach yesterday, and you are going in the coach again to-day after breakfast; but now we must get up,” said my father, looking at his watch.

When he was partly dressed he rang for the chambermaid, and ordered her to wash and dress me, and then bring me downstairs to breakfast with him. I felt rather afraid as she carried me out of the room, but the thought that I was to breakfast with papa, and have a ride in the coach afterwards, somewhat comforted me. The woman had a pleasant voice and smile, and handled me gently, and I was soon chattering to her as if she had been my own nurse.

We entered the coach again, and about mid-day reached Lonsdale. I had three aunts, my

father's maiden sisters, Mrs. Diana Neville, Mrs. Theodosia Neville, and my aunt Joan, who was called Miss Neville. The two elder ones were nearly thirty-five years older than my father. He and his sister Joan were the offspring of a second marriage, and were, I suppose, young in reality, though I thought them venerable, but my aunts Diana and Theodosia were already old women. The last named was at this time absent from home.

I felt frightened and cowed as I walked, holding my father's hand, into the large prim, formal-looking room in which they sat. I was too young then to know what gave it that cheerless aspect—I only felt it was a dreary place. Shyly and timidly I raised my eyes. Unfortunately I was near-sighted—I could not see anything without staring at it long and earnestly: this habit gave my aunts the impression that I was bold and forward.

There was nothing to reassure me in the countenance of my relatives. My eldest aunt had marked aquiline features, a rigid erect form, and there was something eerie in the proud glance of her light grey eye. I clung closer to my father, and looked at my aunt Joan. I had, it is true, seen her before, but only for half an hour or so at a time, and thought no more about her than any other chance visitor; but now I was come here to stay,

and I longed to see a pretty face. A child's idea of beauty does not consist in features—I knew a very plain woman whom I, and every child that approached her, thought beautiful, she looked so kind and loving. My aunt Joan's features were more irregular and harsher than my aunt Diana's, and she had an habitual smile, and an artificial softness in her voice, that expressed a hollow, cold, artificial nature. One looked cross, but that was all ; the other inspired me with strange distrust and terror.

Each of them received us after her own fashion.

“So, Robert,” said the eldest, “I hear there’s another brat born. I can’t think what you mean to do with so many children : and then you come here plaguing me with this one. Come here, miss, and let me look at you ! I hear you are a very naughty child at home. I never allow children to be naughty—I whip them till they are good.” And the stern old woman pulled off her spectacles, laid them down on the table, and peered long and curiously with her fierce grey eyes into my face.

“And so, I suppose you think her pretty, Robert ?” said she, at length. “She’s just what her mother was, a mere pink and white wax doll. There, child—there’s a cake for you—go and sit down on that hassock by the fire, and eat it, and don’t make crumbs on my carpet.”

"Robert," said the second, taking my father's hands, "I am so rejoiced to see you, my dear brother, and your sweet child. I assure you we will take great care of her. You will be very happy here, won't you?" she added, turning to me, as I sat munching my cake.

Tears came into my eyes. My little heart said loudly "*No!*" so I said nothing.

"Come here, Elizabeth," said my aunt Joan, "little girls should not be sulky; come here and answer my question, and don't look so cross. Don't you think you will be very happy here?"

Still I held my tongue. My father in a stern voice ordered me to answer directly.

"Oh! I want to go home, I want to go home!" cried I, bursting into a violent fit of tears.

"Now, that is being naughty, Elizabeth," said my aunt Joan in her soft falsetto voice; "we tell you we shall be very kind to you, and ask you if you will not be very happy with us here, and instead of answering you begin to cry, and say you want to go home. I do not wonder your mamma does not love you, if this is the way you behave to her; nobody can love naughty children. Do you think your papa and mamma *can* love you?"

"No!" I sobbed. "No! I know nobody loves me, and I wish I was dead; I wished so the day

before yesterday when they sent me to sit on the box in the spare room, because I would not say I was sorry to leave mamma. Oh ! I wish I was dead ! ”

“ You wicked little girl,” said the elder lady, putting on her spectacles and looking at me through them with her sternest glance. But I saw it not—bewildered, frightened, and over-powered, I had burst into a paroxysm of tears bordering upon convulsion.

Miss Neville rang the bell ; the butler answered it. “ Send Liston here ! ” Liston came, and she directed her, in her sweetest tones, “ to put that naughty child to bed.”

My father stayed some time at Lonsdale, and his presence was a comfort to me, although he invariably concurred with my aunts in every reproof they administered, every chastisement they inflicted ; for he was something known and familiar. But one morning I went down stairs to breakfast as usual, and found his place vacant. Already I had learnt that crying was considered naughty, so I suppressed the tears that were ready to flow, and began slowly, and half-choking, to eat my breakfast in silence.

My aunt Joan waited some time, and finding I said nothing, burst out—

“ I always said it—that child has no more feeling than a stone ! ”

“ Children’s feelings are seldom deep. They

cannot comprehend anything beyond the present moment, and Elizabeth probably expects to see Robert come in, just as if he had been out for a walk."

"Nonsense! Don't tell me that," said the low dulcet voice. "She was two days travelling herself, and she is old enough to remember it. She knows well enough her father is gone, but she does not care. She has no heart."

I had a heart—every pulse of which was throbbing at this unjust accusation. I had felt so sad, so desolate, when I entered the room and saw my father's place empty—and I had tried so hard to be good, and *not to cry*—and now I was called heartless for not crying. I buried my face in my basin of bread and milk, but the rising sobs prevented my swallowing; I choked, spluttered, let the basin fall from my hands, and, overwhelmed with misery, and aghast for the consequences, as it rolled down, spilling all the contents on my aunt Diana's precious carpet, I burst into a fit of uncontrollable weeping.

"There, child, I know you didn't mean it," said she, patting my head; and she stooped down to wipe up the slop with her pocket-handkerchief, and collect the broken pieces of china. Then ringing the bell, she said calmly, "Give this handkerchief to Liston, John, and tell her to

bring me a clean one ; and do you bring in a cup and saucer for Miss Elizabeth, for I know there is no more milk, so she must be made a woman of, and have tea this morning : and after that bring a clean cloth and a bowl of cold water, and rinse the place well, and there will be no mark on the carpet. There, child, hush now, don't cry," and once more she patted my head.

I felt almost as if a lioness had given me a pat, and yet I knew she meant kindly. I could not divest myself of the fear with which she inspired me, or I should have loved her, stern as she was, far better than my smooth-voiced, smooth-faced Aunt Joan.

Oh, parents ! parents ! beg with your children —*starve with them, if need be*—but don't give them over to others, and especially to your *single* sisters !

By parents children are received as pledges of love—precious gifts from God himself ; but by the aunt as a heavy burden, laid on her probably when her health and spirits are gone, and her temper is cankered by disappointment. She wants the indulgence, the tender sympathy, necessary to rear the minds and hearts of the young to their full stature.

My childhood was dreary beyond expression. It would have been drearier, but for my aunt Theodosia, who, when permitted, used to take

me out walking with her, and buy me many a little gift suited to a child's taste. But she was almost as much a cipher in the family as I was. She had neither the vigorous understanding and quickness of perception which characterized my aunt Diana, nor the learning of my aunt Joan, who studied algebra, mathematics, hydrostatics, and I know not what; besides understanding most modern languages.

Unfortunately for me, she thought she had also a particular talent for education, and took me under her own peculiar care, allowing no one to interfere in her management of me. I believe no one wished to do so. The whole family looked upon her judgment as infallible: to her even my stern aunt Diana yielded without a murmur:—what Joan said, *must* be right.

For all this, there never was a person more unfitted by temper and character to undertake the education of a child. She was arbitrary, passionate, and unjust. The opinion she had once advanced she never retracted, but upheld in spite of the strongest proof to the contrary; she warped and distorted facts by looking at them only through the glass of her own prejudices; and if any one attempted to prevail on her to put it aside, and regard the naked truth, she shut her eyes.

I was a shy, timid, imaginative child, shrink-

ingly sensitive to kindness or its opposite, and capable of passionate affection. She took it into her head that I was cold, obstinate, and sulky; and having laid these down as the leading points in my character, she acted upon her decision, always taking the worst possible view of everything I said or did.

As soon as I could read the first volume of Mrs. Barbauld's easy lessons, she began to teach me French. I wished to please her—I took pains with my tasks and learned rapidly, but she was not satisfied. “It is no merit in her,” she would say, as she put away a long lesson satisfactorily said; “the child has a taste for languages and books, that's all.”

At five years old I could be trusted to go alone to a child's party, and abstain resolutely from taking more than the half orange or the piece of tart she permitted me—yet she said I was disobedient. She told me that it was mean and wicked to lie. If I broke anything she acknowledged that I told of it myself—yet she harassed me by continually doubting my word.

She owned that I would give away the things I prized most to any one I loved, yet she maintained I was incapable of affection; while if I hung about her or fondled her, I was almost always told not to be tiresome, and ordered to go away and not rumple her gown. When she

went from home, and I cried because she was going, she told me—in the low, cold tone which with her indicated rising passion—“to curb my feelings ;” if I repressed my tears, she said, as of old—“she has no heart.”

My feelings were quick, but I was easily repulsed. When I had been reproved for caressing her, I could not, ten minutes afterwards, spring upon her knee and kiss her when she called me—because Lady Stanhope or Mrs. Strangways had just come in. *She* would have liked me to be always clinging to her and fondling her before others—I shrank from any public exhibition of love.

There was a young man who visited at our house, who made a great pet of me, and I loved him passionately in return. One night, when I was about five years old, my aunts gave a party, and he was there. He wore in his coat a sprig of clematis that he had plucked in crossing the common. I found it the next morning on the floor, dead and trampled ; I picked it up and laid it away with my treasures, because *he* had worn it—but I cautiously avoided letting any one see it.

I was seven or eight, when my father, whom I had not seen for a year or two, fell dangerously ill. In hanging up a dress one morning, my aunt Joan saw a dirty crumpled piece of paper among some toys and horse-chestnuts I was allowed to keep at the bottom of the cup-

board. Seeing it was in my writing, curiosity prompted her to read it ; it was a prayer for my father's recovery which I had composed, and repeated every day after my usual ones. Surely these were not the traits of a *cold, callous* disposition ?

She said I was naughty : the fact was, I was sensitive : and the lonely, dreary life I led among stern grown-up women aggravated my natural disposition, by increasing the delicacy of my constitution. I lived in a state of continual constraint, that was unnatural and unwholesome for a young child. It is true that in fine days I was regularly taken out walking by one of my aunts or Liston ; but still *in* the house I was expected to sit still and quiet for the greater part of the day.

I had a little table, that stood under another in the drawing-room, on which I kept my toys ; and in front of that I sat on a hassock by the hour together. If I got up and ran about, I was presently told not to make a noise ; if I asked questions, I was reminded “children ought to be seen, not heard.”

Sometimes I went to other houses to play with other children ; now and then my aunts invited other children to play with me ; but my usual life was suppressed, strict, and lonely. Yet I had my pleasures ; but they were few, and unlike those of a child.

Lonsdale was a beautiful place. A little beyond the village swept a noble river, edged on one side by steep precipitous rocks, on the other by dark massy woods and undulating fields. The walk to it stretched across a wide breezy common covered with fern and heather.

My aunt Joan was rather fond of sitting reading upon these rocks, and often took me with her; and while she read I played and gathered harebells, dwarf meadow-sweet, and daisies. I had a pleasure in these walks she did not fathom, and which I wanted words to express. I liked to stand on the edge of the cliffs, and look down upon the dark glassy river below. I liked to see the black shadow flung across it by the rocks, and the white winding path below them that ran along its brink. I liked to look up at the blue sky and watch the white fleecy clouds float so silently along.

Often upon my memory now returns that breezy air, the peculiar smell of the heath and clematis, the wild warble of the birds. I was six years old when we left Lonsdale. It was eleven years before I saw it again, and I found my way to every haunt of my childhood as readily as if I had never left it.

Poetry was another of my pleasures. My Aunt Joan liked reading aloud, for she read beautifully. Often, when I could not understand the subject, I was charmed by the melody

of the rhythm. I felt the beauty of the psalms and lessons, which we read aloud every day. She gave me Mrs. Barbauld's prose hymns for children, and read them to me, and their measured cadence fell upon my ear like music. When the moon arose, I used to stand at the window, and repeat the lines which describe it; and if I saw a rose-bud, I whispered softly to myself, "See how she sits upon her mossy stem, like the queen of all the flowers; her leaves glow like fire, the air is filled with her sweet odour—she is the delight of every eye."

I had Watts' hymns too. I could not bear them. Nor can I now. The want of companions of my own age, and the restraint in which I lived, made me seek amusement in fancy. I lived in a dream. Half the misdoings my aunts set down to pure naughtiness arose from absence of mind. No doubt I was very provoking. I stood with my legs crossed to relieve a weakness in one of them, and when I was called did not remember to uncross them, and fell flat on the floor. When I was sent with a message to the cook, I forgot I had the stairs to descend, and tumbled from top to bottom; and in the street I required perpetual watching, for fear I should be run over by a carriage or fall into an area. This was not all. My aunt Diana undertook to teach me the mys-

teries of hemming and seaming. I began my work with the best intentions in the world, but ere long I was lost in my dream-world. I lost my needle, knotted my thread, took a long stitch here, a short one there: flounced my hem, puckered my seam, and got into all manner of hobbles and disgrace: but it was not *intentional naughtiness*.

My aunt Joan was at this time engaged to be married. The match was broken off, and we left Lonsdale. We removed to a town. Oh! how I hated our new home! No winding river, no picturesque rocks, or breezy common, were there. Inclosed within lofty gates, surrounded by high walls, stood our house, garden, and field. The trees and grass looked dingy, the earth black; the flowers had that peculiar pale sickly appearance which belongs to plants growing in a smoky, unhealthy atmosphere. There was no change now from the monotony of my life, no pleasant walks through green fields with aunt Theodosia, no picking wild flowers while aunt Joan sat reading on the rocks. Round the field ran a gravel walk, beside it a long border in which grew flowers, and fruit trees were planted against the high walls. There I took my daily exercise, for I could be trusted not to touch the fruit. The luscious peaches, the ripe nectarines, and green gages lay by scores upon the ground, and I never even

thought of taking one. Once I remember I took a little gum from the bark of a plum-tree, and my aunt Joan magnified it into a great crime. I was whipped, and made to kneel down and ask God's pardon, and believed myself a dreadful sinner.

My childish faults were not punished *and forgotten*, as children's faults *ought to be*. My aunt Joan, and even my aunt Diana, talked *for years afterwards* of an ill-written copy, a chance fit of disobedience, or a lesson badly said.

If I read of a naughty child, I was always indirectly told that I resembled him or her, till I got at last to believe myself the wickedest child on the earth. There was one story in *l'Abbé Gaultier Leçons Graduées* that I never could finish for the hysterical weeping it brought on. Once I remember that for three days my aunt Joan hardly spoke to me, and that I was haunted by an indefinite sense of having committed some awful crime—what I did not know, as she taxed me with nothing. I believe she fancied I had told a story; but I had not. I recall all this now, and blame *her*: then I wept, because she and my aunt Diana thought me so wicked. It never occurred to me *then* that I was treated differently to other children, for I knew no other home.

Before, my aunt used, at rare intervals, to pet

and play with me ; now her sorrow of heart made her always harsh. I understand, *now* that I know all, why she became so cross and severe over my lessons after we left Lonsdale. Her mental irritation vented itself upon me ; and she and my aunt Diana never saw how unreasonable and hard they were to a young solitary child.

Oh ! how I hated that town-dwelling, where they were all so cross ! How I abhorred the pent-up, closed-in field and garden ! I longed for freedom with unutterable longing—for wings to get away beyond those high red brick walls. Every morning I looked at them with a sort of despair. I never went outside them except to church, or, on very rare occasions, to pay a visit with my aunts ; and I fancied that if I could only get to where I saw kites flying, I should see rocks, and water, and pleasant fields again. I talked so much of this wish, that one day my aunt Theodosia took me to the place where the boys went to fly their kites.

It was a brickfield, surrounded by ditches.

My disappointment was so great I could hardly forbear tears. It may seem strange, but it is true, that the ugliness of this place, after the wild romantic scenery to which I had been accustomed, actually preyed on my young spirit. To get away from those brick walls, and see flowers and fields, was my ceaseless aspiration.

I had my wish sooner than I expected. I was sent to my father's.

At first I was glad when I was told I was to go home to papa and mamma, and my brothers and sisters. As the time for my departure drew near, I felt pain at the approaching separation from my aunts; and when the day actually came, my grief brought on one of those fits of convulsive crying for which my aunt Joan had so often whipped me.

She said, in the low tone she used when displeased—more awful than any violent scolding I ever heard, accompanied as it was by flashing eyes, set lips, and face white with passion—

“Pray, now, stop. It’s folly to cry in that way. If you had cared for us, you wouldn’t have been so often naughty over your lessons—everybody knows you have no feeling,” gave me a cold kiss, and handed me over to the maid to put inside the coach which had stopped to take me up.

Liston gave me many warm kisses, as she carried me through the great gates, and lifted me into the coach. “Don’t cry, Miss Lizzy,” said she; “you’ll soon have your brothers and sisters to play with.” That thought, and my aunt Joan’s unkind farewell, which I felt to be quite undeserved, inasmuch as I generally took great pains with my lessons, made me dry my eyes, and I said to myself, as I sat ruminating in my corner, “that I was glad to go home!”

I reached the small market town near which my parents lived. The nurse and children had been sent in a cart to fetch me and my trunk from the coach-office. I think now that if my child had been four years away from me, I should have been waiting for her at the inn door. But, then, everything seemed pleasant. I liked the looks of my pretty brothers and sisters, who glanced shyly at me with their great eyes ; and it was *such* fun to ride in a cart—I had never ridden in one before. Then, when we drove out of the town, I saw hedges, and flowers underneath them, and I clapped my hands in delight.

“ Oh ! Thomas, do get me some periwinkles—please do ? ”

“ Perry—what, Miss ? ”

“ Periwinkles—those long blue things,” for they hung in long graceful wreaths over the high bank.

Thomas was good-natured, and besides amused at seeing me so beside myself at the sight of what he thought such common things as primroses and “ th’ blue flowers ; ” he gathered a large handful for each of us, and then we went on. We should never have got home if I had had my own way ; for each tuft of flowers appeared to me lovelier than the last.

“ Miss ’Lisbeth, I’ve gathered ’ee plenty, and I wean’t gather no more. We shall never get

home to-night. You'll see plenty in th' fields to-morrow."

I knew he had been indulgent, and I asked for no more, trusting to his promise that I should see plenty to-morrow. I did ; but from that day to this I have never again seen the periwinkle growing wild. I should like once more to go down that high-hedged Bedfordshire lane in the early spring, and see the blue periwinkles.

I ran in with the other children to my mother ; her embrace was almost as cold as my aunt Joan's, and I drew back, chilled and embarrassed.

" How like you are to your aunt Joan, and you speak just like her ; you've just her prim manners. There, go into the nursery, and Susan will take off your things."

My aunt Joan and my mother detested each other, and I knew it. I felt from this speech I should be no favourite at home.

I followed the others to the nursery. It was a huge garret, extending all over the house, one end being partitioned off for a sleeping apartment, and made a capital nursery from its size. When our hats and coats were taken off, I wanted to play with my brothers and sisters, who had been sociable enough with me in the cart. Tom ran under the sloping roof, and, crouching there sullenly, would not come out ; the elder boy climbed on a chair, and continued

resolutely looking out of the window in the roof, from which he could see nothing; refusing to turn round. I went up to Claudia, she bit me —Jane roared.

"Go away with you, and let 'em alone, Miss 'Lisbeth," said the nurse; "I knew there'd be no end of trouble when you came."

She had never seen me before. With the others she had lived two years, and she regarded me as an interloper, who had no business on her premises.

I sat down on a rush-bottomed chair, without work, or book, or doll—more alone in my father's house than I had ever felt among my stern aunts since the day I first went to them. At last, in about an hour, the housemaid fetched me to drink tea in the parlour. There I found my father, who kissed me, told me I was grown, asked after my aunts, cut me some bread and butter, and resumed the conversation with my mother, which my entrance had interrupted. There was no petting, no making much of the long-absent child, as I had fondly anticipated. After tea, my mother told me to return to the nursery, and I went.

Home was not what I had expected. I found it less so the following day. My aunt Theodosia had taken me to select, and given me money to buy, some toys as presents for my brothers and sisters. When my trunk was unpacked, I got

these treasures and distributed them. They snatched them rudely from me, did not even thank me for them, and in a few moments broke them to pieces. A large empty cask that stood on the nursery floor was half full of similar relics of all such toys as could be destroyed. I went to look at its contents, Tom kicked me, and the other snatched the fragment I had taken up away, exclaiming, "I should not have his things!"

My life at home was wretched. Claudia and Jane cried for every valuable I possessed, from my wax doll to my cups and saucers, and whatever they cried for they had, so that in a short time all my possessions were destroyed. As to my brothers, they struck me with doubled fists, and kicked me with their thick shoes. They were younger than I was, though not much, but they were far stronger: they hurt and frightened me.

I do not mean to dwell on the painful subject of a mismanaged family; but merely to show why I was unhappy in my home. Nevertheless, despite all mismanagement, it would have been *far better* for me to have lived from infancy to youth in my parents' house, to have cuffed and quarrelled and made friends again with my brothers and sisters, than to have grown up as I did a stranger to them, educated to a higher degree of refinement, with quite other feelings,

thoughts, and ideas than theirs. Nor when I speak of my parents as receiving me coldly do I mean to blame them. That they loved me less than the others was in persons of their temperament a necessary consequence of my early removal from them. I left them at the age when childhood is most endearing and engaging, and now I stood a stranger at their hearth. *I did not seem to belong to them.*

Causes over which I had no control, which no goodness or amiability of mine could have prevented, made me experience the truth of the proverb, “that between two stools one falls to the ground.”

My aunt Joan, who boasted descent from a younger branch of the famous Earl Warwick’s family, had as great a passion for governing as the king-maker himself. If she could, she would have governed kingdoms; as she could not, she ruled her family—some of them with an iron hand. She was a tender, generous sister to my father; he could see no faults in the sister who helped him in all difficulties, and never saw any errors in him; but his marriage had displeased both Mrs. and Miss Neville.

“ Robert, with his personal beauty and good family, might have done so much better. Why did he not marry a woman like Lucia Digby,

who has a good fortune, and is intellectual, and descended from Sir Kenelm Digby?" my aunt Joan used to say wrathfully, and my aunt Diana echoed her lamentations.

They did not see that Miss Digby would not have suited him in any respect, while my mother was the very woman for him.

She was neat, active, bustling, and a capital housewife, and my sickly, poor, fastidious father sat down every day to as delicate a dinner as if it had been dressed by a man-cook. His own wife's hands had prepared it, to tempt his languid appetite—and then she had run upstairs, quickly and deftly exchanged her coloured morning gown for spotless white—her beautiful glossy hair was always in order—and sat down with him to the neatly spread board, also laid out by her hands—looking just as if she had never moved from her drawing-room or entered a kitchen that day. In his long severe illnesses her cheerful spirits sustained him. Her tender nursing saved his life again and again; and if sometimes—for both were hasty—they flew into a passion with each other, and exchanged angry words—they presently forgot all about it, *when my aunt Joan was not by to interfere.*

She, who never rescinded an opinion, who never looked at both sides of a subject, could see no merits in my mother; she could not forgive her, a mere surgeon's daughter, for marrying

Robert Neville, in spite of all her efforts to prevent the match.

Whenever the two ladies met, there was a ceaseless skirmishing going on ; but I must say my aunt Joan was *always* the aggressor. She lectured my mother on the way she managed her house and her children ; found fault with the colour, material, and cut of her gowns ; unjustly accused her of wanton and wasteful extravagance ; and by constantly appealing to my father to support her opinions, irritated him against his devoted wife in a way no woman could bear ; and all the time she was making irremediable mischief, prided herself on the good she was doing. As Earl Warwick wanted to reduce King Edward to a mere puppet governed by his will, so she wanted to make my mother a mere dim shadow—to bring her into a state of dependence no wife could brook ; a dependence not on her husband's superior judgment—but on his sister's. She desired to be appealed to on every subject when present—and when absent, to be consulted by letter.

Happily for my mother, my aunt did not often visit my father ; but she never failed to point out all her defects and shortcomings in her letters to him.

I was the chief victim to this domestic disunion. My mother could not bear to see me growing up like my aunt Joan.

"I spoke, I read, I even *looked*," she said, "like her, and I had learnt all her fine-lady airs."

How could I help it? She taught me to read, and unconsciously I acquired her accent and modulation of voice. The habits my mother called "fine-lady airs," were inculcated in me under pain of severe chastisement; for both my aunts thought with Solomon that "he that spareth the rod spoileth the child."

My aunt Joan, on the other hand, declared—"I was a mere pink and white wax doll, just like my mother in her girlish days, with no real beauty, and no expression. I had nothing of the Nevilles in me; I was my mother over again, in temper, person, and face."

Truly does the Bible say, "No man can serve two masters." A child ought to look up with dutiful reverence to its parents; but when it is tossed about like a shuttlecock from one person to another, and each superior does not hesitate to express before it the harshest and most contemptuous opinion of the other, that reverence *must be lost*.

Before I went home I thought my aunt Joan infallible. I learnt from my mother that she was as full of faults as myself.

Then I called to mind various instances in which she had been harsh and unjust to me: various things she had said of my mother before

me, which never ought to have met a child's ears : and I felt my mother was right.

My mind became divided. I saw good in both, but could go wholly with neither—and I was but nine years old. In this frame of mind I returned to my aunts' house.

CHAPTER II.

IT was not to the dark, gloomy town-house, with its dingy black field and high walls, that I went back. Before I was summoned to rejoin my aunts they had settled themselves in a small country village, among their own kith and kin.

The scenery around was very pretty. There were no grand features; no heath-clad hilly slopes, no wild moors glowing with golden gorse, no mountains or lakes; but everywhere that calm smiling beauty so peculiar to England, and so exhilarating because it betokens a productive, well-cultivated, and prosperous country. Through fertile corn-fields and meadows green with rich luxuriant herbage, past many a well-wooded cliff, flowed a clear river. Far and wide on either hand spread the rich champaign prospect; and at every few miles distance, embosomed in dark woods, or standing at the bottom of an avenue of old trees, rose the old ancestral homes of families whose names and deeds form a portion of English history. We were surrounded by Mauleverers, Talbots, Howards, De Veres,

St. Maurs, and Beauchamps; and to most of these families, we—the Nevilles—were allied.

Therefore, though they counted their thousands where my aunts counted hundreds, we held up our heads with the best, as became Nevilles who were of the same stock as “the King-maker.”

And our claims were acknowledged. In every one of these old halls my aunts were received with as much respect as if they had still owned, like their progenitors, innumerable manors. A love of ancestry still holds its place in the hearts of northern country gentlemen. It is time it died out; and yet, poor and paltry as it is, the pride of blood is better than the pride of wealth, which seems likely to usurp its place. When shall we learn to value mental cultivation and moral worth as we ought to do, and esteem a man for his merits rather than for his acres or his thousands?

We valued ourselves not a little upon our ancestry, and were gently condescending to Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, the Miss Blacks, old Mrs. Hewson, Mrs. Sims, and “such persons,” calling on them about once a quarter, and staying ten minutes. My aunts, moreover, patronized the surgeon, and said he “seemed a respectable, well-behaved sort of young man;” but I believe they would as soon have thought of asking Sir Everard Græme’s butler to tea as Mr. Jones.

When I say my aunts, I must always be understood to mean my aunt Diana and my aunt Joan, who were the governing powers. My aunt Theodosia could never be brought to entertain a proper sense of her dignity as a Neville. *She* grew intimate with Thomson, Jones, and Jenkins, and would have visited Dobbins, had there been a Dobbins in the place; and I was equally low-minded, for she took me with her in these visits, and they were all kind to me. I liked them as well as any Howard or Mauleverer in the neighbourhood.

Perhaps they pitied the solitary child growing up under those two stern aunts; and I deserved pity, for mine was a dreary life for a young creature.

Everything around me was stiff, formal, and uncomfortable. I breathed an ungenial air. Even our large, light sitting-room had a bare, cold, comfortless look; it never seemed inhabited. There were no well-cushioned, tempting arm-chairs; no soft, inviting couches; no tables scattered with books, newspapers, and work, to take up and lay down at will. The book was read, and replaced on its shelf; the newspaper folded up as soon as done with, and placed under a paper-weight, ready for the boy who came to fetch it; the work or netting put away as soon as finished. Every article in the room looked as if it had been taught to know its

place, and had too much principle to move the tenth part of an inch from it. The chairs were drawn up against the walls like a file of soldiers ; and the cumbrous, hard, heavy sofa on the right hand of the fire-place, and the uncomfortable, heavy, square arm-chair on the left, might have been likened to the major and senior captain inspecting them. There could be no doubt they were all on parade.

Oh, those chairs ! It makes my back ache even now to think of them. I have no doubt they were made after a fashionable design, by some unfashionable carpenter. They always looked as if they had risen in the world, and not got used to their position. They could not stand at ease, and they certainly let nobody sit so. Most decided *parvenues*—an unpretending bed-room cane chair, with a hay cushion covered with chintz, would have looked far better, and been more comfortable, than those make-believe rose-woods. Their hind legs were longer than their front ones, in consequence of which the seats sloped so that it required a perpetual effort to prevent yourself from sliding off them. My aunts remedied this inconvenience by using foot-stools ; but if I, a tall, slim girl outgrowing my strength, dared rest my weary spine in this manner, my aunt Diana took off her spectacles, laid them down on the table, and turned upon me a glance I dreaded as much as if it had been

Medusa's. The keen, grey eyes seemed to look through me, and to flash lightning, as she asked in her sternest tone,

"Heyday, Miss ! What will the world come to presently, when children want footstools ? You'll put it away immediately."

I obeyed, and resumed my seat.

"Can't you sit straight, child ?"

I drew myself up, as if I had swallowed the poker, and my aunt Diana turned round again to her book or her knitting. But my feet did not quite reach the ground, and in a few moments the continued strain necessary to retain my seat on those horrid chairs made my back ache so violently, that as I could not relieve myself, like my aunts, by using a footstool, I sought a little ease by stooping forwards, and my aunt Joan, lifting up her eyes from her book, would say,

"There, Diana ! look at her—but no, I will not—such obstinacy is *heart-breaking !*"

No words of mine can describe the bitter stage-pathos of that last word. Oh ! my aunt Joan would have made her fortune on the boards. When I first went to Hilton I used to try to please them, and sit bolt upright ; but when I heard them complaining, day after day, of the uneasiness of those high, sloping-seated chairs, and saw them making themselves comfortable with footstools, while they expected me to endure a perpetual back-ache, I lost all patience in my

heart, took no heed of their scoldings, and stooped whenever I felt tired.

My aunt Diana and my aunt Joan invariably sat opposite each other at the table in front of the fire-place. Behind my aunt Diana's chair, in front of a window to which she always turned her back, that she might command the two front windows looking on the approach to the house, was a long table, covered with a dark blue cloth, with an orange-patterned border, the middle of which was occupied by her desk and a few books ranged formally behind it. The desk was flanked on one side by a small pincushion and the newspaper weight; on the other by my aunt Joan's red morocco work-box, which she never used, because she never worked.

Aunt Theodosia and I always ensconced ourselves at the two ends of this long table, in order to be as much out of sight as possible. But, alas! if my aunt Diana's back was turned to me, my aunt Joan, sitting with gloved hands over her book, commanded my flank; and I think while I remained at Hilton she never left me half an hour alone without grumbling about something.

This sitting-room of my aunt's was large, square, and lofty. Two windows at one end, and a large window at the side where aunt Theodosia and I sat summer and winter, made it remarkably light, without making it cheerful.

The cross lights from the windows were painful to the eyes ; and there was something peculiarly inharmonious in the adaptation of colours and furniture, which betrayed a want of mental and moral harmony in her whose taste had selected them, namely, my aunt Joan. The paper on the walls was a very pale pink, the wainscot and book-cases painted oak, the tables mahogany, the chairs imitation rose-wood, the window-curtains and furniture-covers buff chintz, lined with a dull blue ; the carpet a most objectionable, conspicuous, staring pattern of huge round flowers, with four petals of bright blue, alternating with diamonds of a colour that was neither flesh, nor fawn, nor drab-colour, but a mixture of all those shades ; and the table-covers were a deep navy-blue, with orange borders, of a totally different shade from either the flowers in the carpet or the linings of the window curtains.

I could draw the pattern of that carpet from memory now. Many a weary hour have I sat looking at it in the gloaming, for want of anything else to do.

My aunts liked to sit or stand by the fireside, talking over old times, when it was too dusk to read or work ; but if I grew interested in their conversation, or presumed to ask a question, I was tartly asked “if I supposed they were going to rip up dead people’s reputations to amuse a child ?” or told “to listen to what concerned me,

not to what did not." So I generally sat by the window, and watched the rooks flying home to their nests in the fir trees, or the floating clouds gathering together in large grey masses as night came on, till it grew too dark to distinguish anything, and, cold and melancholy, I went and stood by the fire, or sat on a hassock near it, and looked at the pattern on the carpet, and thought how dull, dreary, and monotonous my life was, and wished, like the lady in my uncle's fairy-tale, "that the roaring bull of Babylon would come and carry me away, and marry me!"

I had many wishes, but the chief one was to go to school, and learn what other young people of my age learned—more especially music and drawing. I compared myself with the girls whose families my aunts visited with feelings of the deepest humiliation.

My aunt Joan held some strange theories about education, as most single women do. They are generally theoretical, not practical, however clever; while a mother, guided by the plain common sense which makes her wish to see her girls like those of other people, brings up her family wisely, according to the manners of her day and age.

One of my aunt's theories was that there is no use in any one's learning accomplishments for which they have not an absolute genius. She would have had no one handle a pencil unless

they bade fair to become a Titian or Michael Angelo; or learn music, unless they had the natural genius of Mozart.

I think all women should be accomplished—not because it is desirable they should be artists, but that they may have talents to cheer and enliven the domestic circle. A moderate skill in music beguiles many an hour away pleasantly in families who are not highly intellectual, have no pleasure in books, and but little conversational talent; and sends them to bed happier and better pleased with one another than when the evening has been spent in ill-suppressed yawns and complaints of dulness. The world is chiefly made up by persons of average abilities, on whom Mozarts and Titians would be very much thrown away; but I have noticed that those families are the most united and affectionate who have the greatest variety of accomplishments to amuse and enliven their homes. There is a great dearth of employment for unmarried women; and it unites sisters to have a mutual interest and occupation in practising music for the family's evening entertainment, who would otherwise have passed their time in idleness or contention. How I have seen those who had no pleasure in reading, no neighbours to visit, and who were not permitted to take any share in the management of the house, pass the day in quarrelling and contradicting each other, and tor-

menting the one unfortunate sister who possessed a love of occupation, even to the taking away of the light she read or worked by. Surely those girls would have been better employed strumming.

Then my aunt Joan maintained that as every well educated woman was, to a certain degree, self-educated, there was no use in wasting money on schools or teachers. Every one, she observed, could teach themselves if they liked. She had.

She used to tell me I had no better prospect than that of going out as a governess; yet she would not allow me to fit myself for the employment, alleging I had no taste for either music or drawing.

Mrs. Mauleverer told her, "Rome was not built in a day, and she could not tell whether I had a talent for drawing or not till I tried;" but my aunt Joan never listened to any opinion that contravened her own.

Then Mrs. Mauleverer rummaged out some old "elements of drawing," paper and pencil, and her son showed me how to hold my pencil, and to outline and shade, during a three days' visit I paid his mother. I took these lithographs home with me, and assiduously copied them, and every other drawing I could lay my hands on, for two years; and at last—touched, I suppose, by my perseverance—my aunt Joan let me have a few lessons from a lady who taught drawing in

Hilton, still maintaining I had no talent, and should never draw as long as I lived. She was partly right. The defect in my eyesight of necessity precluded excellence ; but I had a strong artistic taste, which showed itself from my earliest childhood in my intense love of nature, and the skill with which I grouped flowers together ; and the little knowledge obtained with so much difficulty has been a source of infinite pleasure to me through life, by enabling me to understand the beauty of a picture or an engraving, and invaluable in many a feminine avocation, as selecting colours for a dress, furnishing or arranging a room.

Another lady offered me her daughter's old piano, and all the music she had learnt from. My aunt refused both, saying my practising would annoy my aunt Theodosia, who had a very musical ear.

"Not at all," replied Mrs. Howard ; "you have a large house, and Elizabeth is young and healthy : it will do her no harm to practise an hour or two every day in the cold. Let her take her piano up into the garret ; you would not hear her there."

"She has no taste for music, Mrs. Howard. I am obliged to you for your offer, but I do not wish Elizabeth to play," replied my aunt, shortly.

Afterwards, when Mrs. Howard had departed, she said to my aunt Diana—

"Such nonsense—Mrs. Mauleverer and Mrs. Howard telling *me* what I ought to let Elizabeth learn. She has no ear; and if she had, I do not want her to learn music. The world would not hold her if she knew how to play, and I didn't."

But a greater grief than these mortifications was in store for me: when I was fourteen my father died suddenly. I had seen little of him, but he *was* my father, and I grieved bitterly. From my aunt Diana I met a rough sympathy. My aunt Joan said—

"Hold your tongue, and don't make a noise; every one knows you have no feeling."

After that bitter speech I never let her see me shed another tear. By day I struggled to appear unconcerned, for I knew that any show of feeling would only draw down on me invective and reproach; and I wept half the night through. The consequence was, I fell ill.

I do not know whether my pale face induced my aunt Diana to think I required the society of young companions of my own age, or what her precise reason was—she never told me; I am certain it was a kind one—but about this time she took it into her head to send me to a day-school where other young ladies in Hilton went, in order, as she said, "that I might learn to work decently."

My aunt Joan disapproved of the plan; but

for once my elder aunt carried her point, and I went.

"What nonsense," said my aunt Joan, when, the first evening of my return from school, she saw me sit down to study my English grammar ; "why, I will answer for it, you could write a better letter than Miss Hardy. Child, it's pure waste of time. You could parse at nine years old. I advise you to slur your lessons over ; they are a mere nonsensical form."

I was only fourteen, and foolish enough to feel flattered that my clever, caustic aunt thought so highly of my attainments ; and without reflecting that Miss Hardy was really a clever, well-educated woman, perfectly capable of instructing a much better informed girl than myself, I took her advice, and thus lost the only opportunity ever offered me of obtaining a good solid English education ; and I have regretted it ever since.

Grown-up persons have so many compulsory occupations, so many cares and sorrows to distract their mind or occupy their time, that there are few who have either the leisure or the patience necessary to go over the ground which ought to have been prepared in their childhood, and to lay the foundations of a thorough knowledge of history, geography, grammar, and everything afresh. All through my life I have painfully

felt the disadvantage of my neglected education.

My father had died without a will, and consequently my mother became sole guardian of her children, greatly to my aunt Joan's annoyance, who declared they would all be ruined by bad management.

Mamma's income was now a very small one, and she determined to move into Devonshire, both because it was a cheap county, and because her own relations resided there. She informed my aunt Joan of her intentions by a letter, in which she said, "that as my aunt had thought fit to take me from my family, and bring me up in a totally different style of life to that which her little income would enable her to keep up, and I was of course quite unfit for anything useful, she thought the least she could do was to provide for me altogether."

This letter made my aunt Joan furious. She could not endure the idea that I had the smallest claim upon her, or that in taking her from my parent's care she had contracted any duty or obligation towards me. Probably she felt my mother was right, and was not at peace with herself, and therefore irritated against me. I only know that from that time she conceived a violent aversion to me, and constantly referred to the claim my mother had made as "an unheard of thing."

I think with my mother. I believe that if I took a beggar out of the street, and kept it like my child for some months, I should have voluntarily contracted duties which I should afterwards have no right to disclaim.

The year of mourning expired, and my black dresses were worn out. I had continued to grow rapidly; I was now turned fifteen, and a little taller than my aunt Joan. I had recovered my health, and looks of admiration from gentlemen, and my mirror, told me I was pretty. I was certainly not vain, for I was utterly careless about my appearance, and my aunts often reproached me for being so; I suppose, therefore, that it was to humble me, and teach me my dependence upon them, that they chose the time when I was just starting into womanhood for dressing me like a scarecrow.

Hitherto I had had my frocks made plainly, like other girls of my age; but now my aunt Joan took it into her head to give me certain white gowns that had been laid by for years, ever since the short waists and tight skirts worn under the empire had gone out of fashion. My aunt Diana scarcely ever left the house, and really knew nothing about dress. I was not therefore surprised to hear her say,

“Oh! Joan! those beautiful dresses you had made in Paris! You can’t mean it?”

“Yes, I do,” said my aunt, in that dulcet

voice she invariably used when she meant to annoy any one particularly. "My dear, I will give you those four white dresses. I can spare them, Diana." She knew well that nothing would have induced her to wear one of them herself, and that I knew it also.

"I wouldn't, Joan; and she doesn't thank you."

"Never mind that, Diana. Happily, I do not ask for thanks. She shall have the gowns."

And, alas! I had them. Dresses were worn then with skirts as wide and flounces as deep as they are now, and very long waists confined by a ribbon band and buckle. These detestable white gowns were gored, and about two yards wide round the bottom of the skirts.

Two of them had three rows of very narrow flounces, the width of two of my fingers; and two were trimmed with *crevées*, that is, round holes cut in the skirt, and filled up with a circular piece of finer muslin, forming a puff. The waist was short, and exactly crossed my bosom. Such dresses had not been worn within my memory. Not a maid we had would have put one on; not a poor person in the village suffered her child to appear in them.

I durst make no remonstrance, but I was too true to express pleasure in such a gift. My aunt put them in my hand, and told me to

take them upstairs, and give them to Liston to get up, and I said briefly :—

“ Thank you, aunt Joan.”

Less I dared not say.

“ I told you,” said my aunt Diana—“ she is not in the least obliged to you.”

“ Never mind, I am used to that,” replied my aunt Joan, with a pathetic air of resignation to my ingratitude. The gowns were washed and got up, and I wore them. But my misery was not complete. I wanted a school bonnet. My aunt Diana thought the Leghorn I had had four years too good for me to go to school in. Aunt Theodosia said I might have an old one of hers she was about to leave off wearing, but she did not like it to be said I wore her old bonnet, and therefore she unfortunately took off the trimming, and gave it to Liston, sewing on two purple strings, merely to tie it with.

“ There, Lizzie,” said she, giving it to me, as she came into the room, “ it is good enough to go to school in.”

“ Oh ! quite ; thank you, aunt The,” I answered, very contentedly.

“ Let me look at it,” said my aunt Diana.

I gave it her.

She turned it round, remarked “ that part of the crown which had been covered by the trimming looked whiter than the rest, which was burnt brown by exposure to the sun,” and

told me to "go up stairs and ask Liston for the oldest muslin neck handkerchief she had."

I obeyed, and brought it to her. To aunt The's dismay and my horror, she pinned it on the bonnet crown with the observation "that twenty years before she had seen the beautiful Lady Charlotte Hamilton at church with a pink crape handkerchief tied over *her* bonnet."

"I see, miss," she added, "that you don't like it, but people who have their clothes given to them must be thankful for what they can get."

It was the depth of winter. Snow lay on the ground. My aunt Diana rummaged up out of her store-room an old cloak, which had been dyed, and put aside because it had shrunk so much that it would not meet across the chest. This cloak was given to me. Nobody wore cloaks at that time, but that was of no consequence in my aunts' eyes. They aimed at making me ridiculous.

Its colour was a yellowish green, like a dying sage leaf. It reached nearly to my heels, and would only meet round my neck.

In that narrow, gored, and crevéd white gown, cloak and bonnet, I was sent next day to school.

I got in well enough. I contrived to be late, and the girls were in class. I pulled the obnoxious garments off without observation, and

hung them up in the room appropriated to the day scholars' bonnets, shawls, and baskets ; but when morning school was over, an officious friend would go to help me on with my things. She screamed with laughter when she saw my droll equipment, and darting to the top of the stairs called out—

“ Young ladies, young ladies, here's a sight ! do come and look at Lizzie Neville's bonnet and cloak ! ”

Down they rushed. The whole twenty girls tried them on, one after the other.

As to me, I took the wisest course I could have adopted under such disagreeable circumstances. I said I knew my dress was ridiculous to a degree, but I was obliged to wear what my aunts chose ; and I joined in the laugh as each girl in turn strutted round the room in my garments ; but in my heart I deeply resented the unfeeling harshness which had exposed me to such humiliation.

The shouts of laughter brought down Miss Hardy—even she could not keep her countenance when she saw Annie Langton parading up and down in that absurd bonnet and cloak ; but she felt for me, and repressing her merriment as much as she could, said gently,

“ Young ladies, it is half-past twelve, and high time Miss Constance De Vere and Miss Elizabeth Neville returned home ; do not detain them.”

Had my aunts been unable to afford me better clothes no angry feelings would have been excited in my mind, however mortifying this peculiar dress might have been ; but though they were always harping on the great expense my father's family entailed upon them, and telling me that but for their kindness I should be in the workhouse, there were no signs of penury in their establishment. We lived in a large well-furnished house. We never sat down to dinner without a man-servant out of livery waiting behind my aunt Diana's chair ; and there were always three sorts of wine on the table ; and besides the man-servant, whose wages were forty pounds a-year, they kept a lady's maid, a house-maid, and a good cook.

They did much for my brothers and sisters ; they gave me a home, but they made me feel the obligations I owed them so heavily as to obliterate them. *People have no right to expect gratitude from those whom they humiliate and degrade.* A couple of plain print frocks, made as they were worn, would have cost little, and prevented the angry feelings that rose in my heart towards the relatives who made me a public laughing-stock.

The quizzing of my schoolfellows was not the only mortification to which my unlucky dress subjected me. As the abominable cloak would only meet round my neck, it described a semi-

circle round my head, or streamed like a flag in the wind, at right angles with my neck, on boisterous days ; and was the jest of the whole village.

"I know some of you were well enough to go out to-day," said Mrs. De Vere, when we had all been laid up with colds, and she called to enquire after us, "for I saw the *Neville banner* float past the window."

"Ship ahoy ! ship ahoy !" shouted Captain St. Maur another day as I walked by his cottage, on my way home from school. I turned unwillingly, and saw him standing breathless, and laughing, at the garden gate.

"I saw your *flag*, Lizzie," said he ; "but the fair Elizabeth is such a fast-sailing clipper, I could scarcely get to the gate in time to hail her. Here, take this book with my compliments to your aunt Joan, and tell her that I and Mrs. St. Maur are coming to drink tea with her this evening, if she is not otherwise engaged."

I took all this bantering in very good part. It was my aunts I felt angry with. Moreover, I verily believed our neighbours wanted to shame them into dressing me decently. *They were parents.* My mother, perhaps, might have said many a harsh thing to me, and given me many a cuff in a passion, had I lived at home ; but she would not have outraged my feelings by making me a public mockery. I am sure that

had I appeared in any town streets in that garb, I should have been hooted at as a mad woman. Let any one imagine for a moment the bitter humiliation it was to a young girl just flushing into womanhood, and conscious that, if she had not good features, a rare delicacy of complexion made many a passing glance rest lovingly on her, to be thus dressed.

My aunt Diana took no notice of any jokes regarding my attire ; I wore that bonnet and cloak all winter ; but one day in spring I came home from school as usual at twelve o'clock, mounted to my room, pulled off my things, laid them on my bed, and went down stairs to luncheon.

When I went up to my room to get ready for afternoon school, both cloak and bonnet were gone.

I went down to the drawing-room.

"I can't find my cloak and bonnet, aunt Dian ; I left them on my bed when I went down to lunch."

"Can't you put on your shawl and your other bonnet ?" was the sole response vouchsafed.

I comprehended, and bounded gladly upstairs. This shawl, which I was so glad to be allowed to wear—my only one—was an old nursery shawl of my mother's. She had accidentally left it behind her, on a visit to Hilton, and my aunts

made it over to me. It had once been white cloth, with crimson and green leaves painted on it; but it had been washed so often, that the ground resembled an old flannel petticoat in colour and texture, and the flowers were so faded as to be rather a deformity than an ornament.

How Sir Raoul Beauchamp's two powdered footmen used to look at one another and snigger, as in my four-year-old brown, sunburnt, leghorn bonnet, with its faded three-year-old light blue ribbons, the flannel-petticoat shawl, and the gored white gown, with its two rows of crevées, I shily and awkwardly followed my aunt Joan into the library, the door of which the stately butler was holding open; and saw around fair dames and graceful maidens, arrayed in the very height of fashion; and had, perhaps, a chair handed me by a nobleman.

I liked and loved Anne and Melusina Beauchamp, who treated me like a younger sister, instead of looking down upon me as grown-up young women sometimes do on school-girls; but there was nothing I dreaded more than the purgatory of passing that row of grinning footmen, and encountering the half careless, half supercilious air of their master's guests.

Venus herself would have looked and felt awkward, so attired, and introduced among fashionable, well-dressed women. I was natur-

ally sensitive and shy: the consciousness that I looked ridiculous made me nervous and awkward. There was no ease, no freedom in my movements; and this drew on me hourly stern reproofs from my aunt Diana, and sarcasms from my aunt Joan. They laid all that was *outré* in my appearance to my obstinate determination to be awkward, *when they ought to have laid it to my dress*. They continually compared me with my schoolfellow, Constance De Vere, a very pretty girl, who was always dressed with remarkable elegance.

"Only look, Joan"—my aunt Diana, who sat opposite the door, would say—"how that girl enters a room!"

"Go back, Elizabeth," said Miss Joan, "and try if you cannot enter a room like a young lady."

I obeyed.

"That is worse still; try again."

"Once more."

"Go again, and don't stick out your knees and move your limbs so awkwardly. Why can't you move gracefully, like Constance De Vere?"

"Oh! it's no use! It's all lost time, Joan. She does not *want* to improve," said my aunt Diana.

In a few moments she turned round—"Joan, look!"

"I see. Sister, you know she *will* poke. Elizabeth, come here."

I came to the end of her table.

"Do you know, Elizabeth, that you owe to us the clothes you wear, your food, your shelter from the weather? And what do we ask from you in return?—a little obedience and attention to our wishes for your improvement—that you sit straight on your chair, and that in walking you should not stick out your knees, but move gracefully. Look at your friend Constance. She is younger than you are, but how well she enters a room!—how elegant she always looks! What prevents you looking like her?"

"*My dress!*" thought I, but I did not dare to say so.

"I ask you again, why you cannot look and move like Constance de Vere?"

What could I answer? The graceful Constance would have looked awkward in that short-waisted, narrow gown, whose scantiness revealed every motion of the limbs; but I dared not say this. I stood mute.

"Go back to your seat," said my aunt, in her tragedy voice. "There is no doing anything with you. You are utterly ungrateful and heartless."

I began to cry.

"Joan! Joan!" said my aunt Theodosia, "there are the Beauchamps coming."

"The Beauchamps? Now, pray, Elizabeth, give over crying, and let us have no more of

this. You had better run up to your own room and bathe your eyes, and then come down; for you know Anne and Melusina will ask after you. You know, my dear, I only spoke for your good."

I ran upstairs, and bathed my face, and tried to compose myself. Before I could do so, my aunt Theodosia was sent up to fetch me.

"Lizzie, my dear, Anne and Melusina want to see you. Pray, make haste and come down. Oh, dear!" she added, sitting down in my chair while I dried my face and re-arranged my hair, "how I do wish Joan and Diana would give over lecturing; I declare I'm as tired of their interminable scolds as you can be. Whether you sit or stand, come in or go out, it's all the same. Now, *do* make haste, or we shall have Joan coming up to fetch us; and when the Beauchamps are gone, we'll go out for a long walk, and not come in again till your aunts have recovered their temper. There, now you'll do. Come—come."

"Why, Lizzie, you look grave! What's the matter?" cried Melusina, giving me a hearty shake of the hand as I followed aunt The into the room.

"Yes, she's quite pale to-day," said Lady Beauchamp, doing the like. "Joan, what have you been doing to her?"

"I think the poor child has been bending too

closely over her work," said my aunt Joan, in a tender voice, as she caressingly patted my cheek. "My dear, you must have a walk."

"She's going to walk with me to Linton," interjected my aunt Theodosia, glad to settle the affair while the Beauchamps were there.

"Oh, indeed! I did not know it. It is a beautiful day, and the walk will do her good. I know it is her favourite," observed my aunt, blandly.

When my brothers came on a visit, my aunt Joan continually pointed out to them my manifold defects—always ending her discourse by asking "why I did not look like Melusina or Constance de Vere, or other young girls?"

"Ah! why, indeed?" echoed Tom.

They knew nothing about the shape or make of gowns, or whether a bonnet was fashionable or the reverse—how should they, two rough schoolboys as they were? But they could see that I did look different to the De Veres and Beauchamps and Howards, and they believed it was all my fault. They grew up in the persuasion that I was the most unamiable girl in the world.

As I tried to oblige them in every way, and as at school—where a girl's temper is always known—I was considered remarkably good-humoured, this may be thought unnatural. Let any one who doubts it turn to De Quincy's

autobiography, and read the tragic story of his tutor's two half-idiot daughters, and the comments that follow on the singular fact, "that if the heads of a family take a dislike to one child, the other members invariably do the same."

Twenty times a day, at the very least, my aunt Joan reminded me that I owed my bread to her and Diana's charity—she always omitted to speak of my aunt Theodosia's share in maintaining me—but for which I might be in the workhouse; for my mother could not keep the five children she had without their help, much less a sixth. "The greatest sacrifice I could make would not be too much," she said, "to repay all they had done for me and my brothers and sisters."

Even my placid aunt Theodosia lost all patience, and used to say to me in private,

"I think I pay for at least one-third of the food you eat, Elizabeth, but I don't taunt you with it. I wonder at Joan."

And I answered, "And therefore, aunt Theodosia, I am grateful to *you*."

Indeed my life at this time was so bitter that, but for my aunt Theodosia's kindness, and the fact that I had never ten shillings in the world, to pay travelling expenses, I should certainly have run away, and tried to earn my bread by servitude. I turned the plan over many times

in my mind. I feared no one would take me without a character, and that I might be forced by want into crime. I endured on.

At last the crisis came.

CHAPTER III.

I WAS sixteen now, and universally reckoned a pretty girl. A Mr. Tracy, who lived in the neighbourhood, saw me. My waxy pink and white complexion—my *beauté du diable*, as my aunt Joan called it—took his fancy; and he availed himself of every opportunity of meeting me in my walks. He was not rich, but he possessed a modest competence; and he was a man of high birth, considerable talent, and unblemished character—a man to whom a wise parent would have gladly and thankfully committed the happiness of a beloved child. He was too honourable to make secret love to me; and he requested my aunt's permission to visit at their house on my account.

He was rudely refused by my aunt Joan.

“ He has but five hundred a year, even with his profession,” sneered she; “ and we’ve had plague enough with poor Robert’s children—we don’t want any more *well-born beggars*. Elizabeth has a comfortable home here, if she knows when she

is well off ; and it's her duty, in return for the benefits showered down upon her, to remain single, and take care of me in my old age. At all events, if she does marry, it must be some man of rank and fortune, who can benefit her family. She has *no right* to consider *herself only* in forming a connection."

"I think it would be better for her to marry. I've always heard Mr. Tracy very highly spoken of, and it would be a great thing to have her under the protection of a good husband," said my aunt Diana.

"I wish to marry Mr. Tracy," I began ; but I was interrupted tauntingly.

"Upon my word ! You *are* a coming young lady !" cried my aunt Diana.

"Yes, indeed !" echoed my aunt Theodosia—she who usually took my part.

"Oh ! you would like to marry, would you ?" sneered my aunt Joan.

My cheeks burnt with shame ; my heart palpitated ; I was shy and timid ; my aunt Joan had thoroughly cowed me as a child ; I had not nerve enough, not moral courage enough, to reply what I felt—"I like Mr. Tracy ; he loves me. You are always reproaching me with my poverty, with my dependence upon you. Let me marry and be independent of you. Do not deprive me of the home offered me by a man I love." This is what I ought to have said—but

I did not. Tears came into my eyes—I hung my head, and looked down on the carpet.

Having snubbed me for my impertinence and forwardness in daring to have an opinion on a subject that so deeply concerned my own happiness, my aunt Diana began again.

“She’s a forward chit! but, Joan, I advise that Mr. Tracy’s offer should be accepted.”

“The thing is settled now. I refused Mr. Tracy permission to visit her,” said my aunt Joan, in that low, softly modulated, yet arbitrary tone which all the family knew indicated that her mind was made up, and nothing should change it.

Mr. Tracy left the country immediately, and returned to South America.

“I shall always regret that you would not let Elizabeth marry Mr. Tracy,” said my aunt Diana, as she gazed on my pale face some weeks afterwards.

“Nonsense! she has a good home here, and everything done that can make her happy; and besides, the world would not have held her if she had had a lover,” replied my aunt Joan.

“Still I am sorry, Joan; I shall always regret you decided so hastily.”

“It’s no use talking about it, Diana. The thing is *done* now, and Mr. Tracy has left England. I don’t want Elizabeth to marry at all; still, I would give my consent if any *very great*

match offered—Mr. Beauchamp or Sir Everard Graeme, for instance.”

I heard with proud, resentful spirit. What ! was I a bale of goods that she might trade off to the best advantage, or keep in hand as she liked ; to have no voice in a matter on which the happiness or misery of my life depended ? Was I to live on for ever this dreary existence ? Never to know what happiness or love was but in name ? To live my aunt Joan’s slave—for I was nothing better—till I was grey and old, or be driven into a marriage with some fox-hunting squire, who had no recommendation beyond his old name and his broad acres ? She would not let me marry Mr. Tracy, a man who had some aim in life—whom I could have looked up to and revered : and what was the chief aim and end of Sir Everard Graeme’s and Mr. Beauchamp’s existence ?

“ *Preserving their game !*”

So closes an essay of Carlyle’s ; and so I argued at seventeen, little knowing how great a mind had expressed the same contempt for mere shooting, fishing, fox-hunting squires before me. In the society among which I occasionally went out, the gentlemen usually congregated together, and discussed game laws, poachers, coveys, and covers ; the last hunting day, and all the previous famous runs for the last ten years ; leaving the ladies to talk about patterns of needlework,

new books, or new flowers, as they chose.

I thought this unpolite. I also thought that the reason they talked so much upon those particular subjects was, that they did not know how to converse on any other. I compared them with a few other men whose professions had compelled them to mix in the world ; and the comparison was by no means to the squires' advantage.

I thought the life of a great lady vapid and inane. As far as I could see, and I often stayed with my aunt Joan in great houses, the ladies had no higher aim in life than a ball or a bazaar, a new gown, or matching two shades of worsted. Their business seemed to be to dress nicely, to move elegantly, to speak softly, and to sit on a chair or sofa with some delicate bit of work in their hands, as much drawing-room ornaments as the china on the mantelpiece ; and I felt I wanted *life*—actual, active, bustling life, with its duties and cares, to exercise my energies. I could not be content to be a languid fine lady.

“ That girl has no proper pride or spirit in her,” observed my aunt Joan, wrathfully, one day. “ I do believe she would rather marry a poor man with three or four hundred a year, and live in one of those bow-windowed houses opposite, like the Smiths, than marry Harry Beauchamp, and be mistress of Beauchamp Abbey.”

"Yes, aunt Joan—a great deal rather, for I don't like Harry Beauchamp."

"You don't know what you like. He never made love to you?"

"I don't wish him to."

"You are a most extraordinary young lady, Elizabeth. When I was your age I should have endeavoured to attract any young man in Harry Beauchamp's position in life, who had been thrown so much in my way, as he is in yours."

I thought of him who was tossing on the wide sea—*thanks to her*—looked furtively at my dress, thinking how attractive I must be in that garb, and replied with some asperity,

"I don't want to attract anybody."

"You never will."

"I don't care," I said aloud; and I added, mentally, "for you wouldn't let me marry Mr. Tracy when I did attract him."

The conversation dropped; but the wrath was brewed, and those three words set it fermenting. Presently my aunt looked at me again, and cried, angrily,

"How you stoop!"

"My back aches."

"If it does, you can hold yourself straight."

I gave a sigh of utter weariness.

"Do you mean to do as you are bid, and conform to our wishes?—or do you mean to go

out as a governess?—for your mother can't keep you."

"I should like to earn my own livelihood, aunt Joan."

"You would—would you?"

"Yes, aunt, I have wished it a long time."

"Very well. You shall have your wish."

My aunt turned ashy pale. She had not meant to bring me to this. She talked of my going out as a governess merely to frighten me; her real intention was to retain me as a humble dependent, on whom she could vent her spleen when she chose—but unintentionally she had brought matters to a head. Pride would not let *her* retract, and *I* did not wish to do so.

I felt that, do what I would, I could never satisfy her imperious, exacting nature—not even if I sacrificed my whole life to her, which I had no thoughts of doing; and I could not bear the idea of passing my existence as I had passed the last fourteen years, in storms of ceaseless invective and reproach. It was better I should go out into the world, and earn my own bread.

The thing was settled.

Mr. Tracy had been gone some months, and I was one day sitting drawing, when my aunt Diana, looking up from her knitting, said—

"There's Mrs. Seton! Elizabeth, let her in!"

Now, our man-servant, having little to do,

chose to do nothing, except bring in the meals, trusted to my opening the door, or else one of the maids doing it, and betook himself daily to the skittle-ground opposite. I rose, as a matter of course, and let Mrs. Seton in. She gave me her hand, but she could not speak; her face was convulsed, her eyes red with weeping. I followed her into the room, and placed a chair for her. She sat down, and, bursting into tears, exclaimed—

“Oh! Mrs. Neville, we have such sad news. Mr. Tracy is dead!”

I was bending over my drawing; I let the pencil fall from my hand, and turned round.

“Go on with your drawing, Elizabeth,” said my aunt Joan, in a cold, stern, menacing tone.

I did not heed—I scarcely heard. I sat still, with my face turned to Mrs. Seton, breathless—almost senseless. She did not see me, for her back was towards me.

“*Go on with your drawing, Elizabeth!*” repeated my aunt Joan, in a yet sterner voice than before.

I laid my pencil down on the table; I rose; I walked up to her; looked at her for an instant, the reproach I dared not express in words in my face, and passed out of the room. I mounted to my chamber; I locked myself in. I did not weep or cry—I was too stunned for that. I believe but for my aunt’s cruel speech

I should have fainted when Mrs. Seton spoke those terrible words. I went to my bedroom window, and stood where I had so often stood to see him ride past—and now he was *dead*, I should never see him pass again!

I could not realize it. I pressed my brow against the cold glass, to relieve the sense of stunning, the confusion I felt. Then I dipt a towel in water, and pushing aside my hair, bathed my forehead. I cannot express my feelings in words; something within me seemed to have given way; I felt an inexpressible longing to shrink together, to collapse, and fall—a sense as if my brain and my strength were both failing, and in a few moments I should sink to the ground and die. I wished to die. What had I to live for? I went to the glass and looked at myself. Was that I?—not a tear in my eyes—nothing in my face to mark that for me all hope had died out of life—no trace of this great storm that had ravaged all the green fields, destroyed all spring buds, blighted all summer promise. It was the same face that had looked at me from it yesterday and this morning—a little paler, a stony look about the eyes—but that was all; and yet, yesterday, this morning, half an hour ago, I had been a warm, hoping, loving girl—for in my secret soul I had cherished the hope that Mr. Tracy would one day return, and return to *me*; and now it was

all over—he was dead—dead—and there was no coming back from the grave. It seemed to me as if the news which had made my heart die within me should also have blasted my outward appearance. In that moment of bitter agony I should have felt actual pleasure if my hair had turned white—if I had suddenly become wrinkled, old, and withered in face as I felt in heart! And it was through his love for me that he had died—it was all *my* fault—my aunt Joan's fault! He had never talked of going back to South America, till he was refused permission to visit me—then he said he should return; and to his friends' arguments, that the climate had injured his health before, he replied, “It did not signify—if he was thought too poor to marry, and have any happiness in life, he might as well die.” And he *was dead!*

It was her fault—her fault!

What did *I* want with riches?—what did *I* care for rank? I would have preferred Mr. Tracy, with his five hundred a year, to any peer of the realm with fifty thousand. What right had my aunt to come between me and my happiness?—to doom me to a life of sorrow, and him to the grave?

A hand tried the lock of my door. I had taken the precaution of fastening myself in.

“Open the door; what have you locked it for?” said the arbitrary voice of my aunt Joan.

I opened it and confronted her.

“ Well ?”

“ What are you doing up here ?”

“ I came up to my own room.”

“ Well, come down. What do you stay here for ?”

“ I am coming presently.”

There was something in my look that forbade her to question further. She turned and went downstairs, and, after a while, I followed her.

When I returned into the drawing-room I put my drawing materials away ; no one asked why I did so. I have no recollection of what I did afterwards. All that day I walked about like one in a dream. All that day my heart seemed turned to stone. I breathed with difficulty ; the air seemed thick and heavy, though I knew it was not so, for I looked out and saw the sky blue and bright, and light, fleecy clouds floating along it ; and people walking about, laughing and talking ; and the birds singing—as if *he* was not dead—*dead in a foreign land—through her !*

Whenever I could I stole up to my bed-room. Oh ! I longed so to cry, and I could not ; I felt as if tears would relieve that dull aching pain in my head and heart ; I longed to throw myself on the ground, to grovel in the dust in my great misery, and water it with my tears.

Whenever I thus stole away, before I had

been many minutes alone in my room, one or other of my aunts came up with the same question, and looked at me with their curious eyes—

“What are you doing here?” And I replied,

“Well?” in the same hard, dry, tearless manner as before.

“Why don’t you stay downstairs? Come down.”

“I’m coming presently.”

I would not let them see my grief, if I could help it.

I thought that day would never come to an end. I have no recollection of anything that was said or done in it, beyond my attempts to get away to solitude, and their following me, and compelling my return to the sitting-room. Oh! how the minutes seemed to stretch out to hours—almost to years!

But night came at last—always welcome as a release from the constraint in which my aunt Joan kept me—but never so welcome as now.

The usual salutations passed, and my aunt Joan kissed me as usual—she was fond of kissing; her way of torturing was the worse to bear, because she always pretended *love* for those she was doing everything to wound and injure; and thus deprived her victims even of pity. She would knowingly, of set purpose,

inflict on you the deadliest suffering, and kiss you afterwards—like Judas.

She kissed me to-night, and I recoiled as from the touch of a basilisk.

I got to my own room—I locked myself in. But I knew her—I should not be left in peace. I would wait as I had been forced to wait all that day—no eye but God's should see my agony.

As I expected, my door-handle was turned, when I had been about a quarter of an hour in my room. I went to the door, unlocked it, and said in the same dry hard tone,

“ Well ?”

My aunt Joan—for it was she, of course—said something—what, I do not remember ; it was something wholly foreign to the question she longed to put, and dared not—

“ Did I grieve ?”

“ Do you want anything ?” I asked as I stood with my hand upon the door-handle.

“ No—only to see if you were in bed.”

“ Not yet, I am going—good night.”

“ Good night, my dear.”

She went, and I locked myself in once more.

I took off my shoes, that I might make no sound, and then I walked up and down the room.

Hours passed so. My candle burnt out, and

I drew up my curtains and let the moonlight into my room.

I sat on the window-sill and looked out. The moon shimmered against the gate-way I had so often watched him ride through—through which I should never see him ride again. As I thought this, my heart softened—I burst into tears.

I threw myself on the floor, and wept there all that night.

I heard the maids get up the next morning and come downstairs; I heard John's heavy step as he crossed the passage, and went lumbering down. Soon my aunts would be astir—I should not be free even to weep.

Liston came to my door as usual, with hot water; I told her to put it down outside, and I would take it in presently.

“What! are you up so soon, Miss Elizabeth?” she said.

I did not want her to see my swollen eyelids, my tear-stained face. I waited till I heard her go as usual into my aunt Diana's room, and shut the door after her; then, very cautiously, I opened my door and took it in.

I had no need to dress, for I had never undressed; but I bathed my eyes with the warm water, to remove, if possible, the trace of tears; then I looked in my glass to see if any redness of eyelid remained.

The face I saw in the glass startled me—it was so pale, so wan, so death-white.

I must tumble my bed, or my aunts would hear I had never slept upon it. I threw myself on it, and lay there till I heard them go down stairs, till I knew breakfast would be made.

Then I rose, pulled the clothes to one side, as if I had just left it, held a wet towel a few moments to my eyes, caught up my hair-brush, and applied it vigorously to my cheeks.

They were sitting at table when I went in, took my accustomed place, and said good morning; each raised her eyes, and looked at me, but my cheeks were red and glowing as usual—how should they know it was with the hair-brush?

Food was nauseous to me; but I forced some down my throat for fear of questions. All my care now was to conceal my grief—I guarded it jealously, as something sacred, with which no one had a right to intermeddle.

The only one from whom I could have borne consolation was my aunt Theodosia, and she was one who never saw beyond the surface. She did not see that anything was the matter with me. The other two did; but I believe they thought I had determined to keep my grief a secret, and that it would be better for all parties not to recognise it. I was young—it would die in time.

For a whole fortnight I strove hard to maintain a cold, indifferent, careless manner during the day ; and at night I locked myself in my own room, and lay on the floor and wept. I had but one wish—to die and rejoin him.

So I lay one night,* when all at once a strange thrill ran through bone and nerve ; a spirit spoke to my spirit, and said, “ Dry your tears, sit up, cease to grieve, he is not dead—but living ! ”

I obeyed the voice ; I rose up, I drew up my blind and looked out again ; the moon shone white and bright, silvered over the path he used to ride along when he came to visit the Setons, and the leaves of the elm-trees in the field.

“ Is he dead ? ” I asked of the still calm night, and night made no reply ; but from my heart rose up a voice. Something strange, inexplicable—something that on rare occasions has warned me of good or evil to those distant ones with whom my spirit was in strong sympathy—replied now,

“ He is not dead—he lives. Cease to grieve.”

I dried my eyes, and I said,

“ He is not dead, I feel—but is he dead to me ? Will he ever return ? Will he ever marry me ? ”

But there came no response.

How strange is life, how full of mysteries ! What

* True.

hidden agency reveals to us one thing which we passionately desire to know, and withholds from us the reply to another about which we are equally anxious? All I know is, that on other occasions beside this, a mysterious voice, heard in the depths of thought, inaudible to mortal ears, in the midst of mirth and gaiety, when least thought of, has proclaimed to me the illness or death of those who were dear to me. I have seen a stranger for the first time, and felt intuitively she would be the wife of a person whom then she had never seen, nor was apparently the least likely to see, since they lived in different counties, and had no mutual friends —nothing to bring them together. Two years afterwards they did meet—and married.

But these revelations — *always true* — come unsought, unwished for. When I have not been thinking of these absent friends, but of something very different, a spirit seizes me, like the Delphian priestess, and puts into my mouth a prophecy.

I was so convinced the voice in my heart spoke truth, that I undressed, went to bed, and slept a long sweet sleep. But for it, I believe the violence of my grief would have actually killed me.

It did injure my health greatly. I lost my brilliant complexion; I became yellow and faded. Every acquaintance we had asked what was the

matter with me, and my aunt Joan's rage and mortification was boundless. She perfectly hated me for having grown ugly ; for having dared to love and grieve, without asking her permission —against her declared will.

The Setons went into the same mourning they would have worn for a brother ; for Mr. Tracy's worth was recognized and honoured by every one except my aunt Joan — she saw no merit that was not set in gold, or circled by a coronet. Ambition to rise to the same rank as that in which her ancestors had moved had ruled her all her life. The lover who had jilted her was an earl's son, and she grieved fully as much for the rank he would have conferred on her as for himself. When grey hairs and increasing years told her she could not hope to make a brilliant marriage herself, she looked to me to succeed where she had failed. She intended me to marry some great man, of whose house she should thus, through me, become virtually mistress.

Her aim was to reduce me to utter, unquestioning submission, to the blindest obedience, so that when she found an eligible match for me I should accept it at her bidding ; and then, she should live with me, and manage my house, and my husband, and me, through him. If I offended her, his anger was to be my punishment.

To this end, she would not allow me to form, or rather to express, an opinion of my own—no,

not about a character in a book, or the colour of a piece of ribbon. I was to see with her eyes, hear with her ears ; to accept her taste and reason as my guides, and not presume to make the smallest use of my own, but consider it a mortal sin even to doubt anything that she advanced.

She meant to rule me as she had ruled my poor father, at the cost of his happiness and his wife's.

To this end she left no means untried. She used to talk to me by the hour of the beauty of self-sacrifice, and say that my duty was not to consider myself, in the least, in marrying, but to make such a match as would enable me to benefit my family ; to push my brothers on in the world, and enable my sisters to form brilliant alliances among the men they would meet at my house—not to entertain school-girlish, frivolous ideas of marrying for love !

If I did not marry at all, that did not signify. I could always remain at Hilton while my aunts Diana and Theodosia lived ; and as at their death she would be left alone in the world, it would then be my duty to remain single, to take care of her in her old age. All this time, while so coolly requiring from me the sacrifice of my life, she repudiated the idea that I had the slightest claim upon her for anything ; and said my mother's conduct in writing to desire she would provide for me was little short of absolute

insanity, as I could not have even the shadow of a right to help from her, and had to thank her charity that I was not in the workhouse.

I was of a generous and affectionate temper. Had she shown me kindness—had she appealed to my *love*—I was capable of sacrificing the dearest wishes of my heart; but I was not one to be coerced into a mode of action against which both my feelings and my judgment revolted.

She told me how my cousin Joanna, daughter of my great-uncle, the Dean of Hereford, had an estate of three thousand a-year left her when she was five-and-twenty, and never saw it, or enjoyed the revenues, till her father's death, when she was turned forty, because he was offended that anyone should have presumed to make his daughter independent of him while he yet lived.

And she pointed out to me, as still more worthy of admiration, the gentle character of his youngest daughter, my cousin Araminta, who was thought by everybody to be a fool as long as her sister Joanna lived; but who turned out, on her sister's death, to have plenty of sense, and to be perfectly capable of managing her own large property, though her extreme gentleness had made her succumb in everything to her sister during her lifetime.

The beauty of these examples was lost upon me. I knew from my aunts themselves that the

Dean was a most violent, unjust, unreasonable old man. I had often, in their conversations with each other, heard them style him "an old tyrant ;" and though I loved my gentle cousin, I thought there was no necessity for allowing herself to be considered a fool to please an imperious elder sister, or aunt either ; so I replied,

" Joanna had three thousand a-year of her own, of which she was mistress, at least after her father's death ; and I do not see why Araminta should not have managed her own property, as Joanna managed hers."

" You do not see !—you do not see the beauty of that perfect sacrifice of self ? Why, she had very good abilities, and, until Joanna died, everybody—even her own family—thought her a fool, because she never expressed a will or wish of her own."

" Well, aunt Joan, I think that was rather foolish. I think she might have been very kind and amiable to Joanna, and done all she could to make her happy, without allowing herself to be treated and thought of as a fool."

" But Joanna was like her father, the Dean, a very proud, high-spirited woman, determined to have everything her own way. Araminta must either have yielded as absolutely as she did, or quarrelled with her."

" I don't see that, aunt Joan. However, I

should have managed my own affairs, and left Joanna to manage hers; and if she chose to quarrel with me for taking the same freedom she used herself, it would have been her fault, not mine."

"Joan," remarked my clear-sighted aunt Diana, "you will never get that girl to think as you wish her. You may as well give it up."

"Oh, yes, I shall," responded my aunt Joan; "she will see and appreciate the beauty of sacrifice in time."

"Not after your fashion, aunt Joan," I thought. "I can see the beauty of a young lovely woman devoting her life to the care of a sick invalid husband—of a mother giving her last crust to her child, and dying herself of hunger—but I see no peculiar merit in passing for a fool to gratify an imperious sister, or to satisfy an exacting, arbitrary aunt."

That tack not answering, my aunt would try another. She would come and stand beside me, push my hair over my forehead, and remark it wanted softening, it had no expression.

"There is no place where the soul sits, as there is in yours and mine, Diana," said she, touching the space just above the nose, between the eyebrows, where the two sisters had a very remarkable indentation—in my aunt Joan's you could have laid your little finger.

"She would look best in caps. My dear, if

you marry Harry Beauchamp, you shall have half-a-dozen beautiful lace caps ; they would become you so ; a cap softens the harshness of your face. I will not mind expending a hundred pounds on your *trousseau* when that day comes."

"It never will come," I answered ; "I don't want Harry Beauchamp, and he don't want me."

" You don't take pains to make him like you. You turn away whenever he addresses you. If you see him at a distance, and possibly can, you walk out of his way to avoid even speaking to him. Other young women would seek a man of his rank and fortune, if they were, as you are, his sisters' intimate friend. His sisters like you—that is a great thing in your favour ; and his father will never object, I am satisfied, to any one Harry likes."

" I don't like Harry Beauchamp, and I never will marry him, even if he asks me," I answered.

" Oh, dear ! oh, dear !" said my aunt, in her tragedy voice, " it's grievous to hear a young girl so obstinate. Do you mean, Elizabeth— ? "

" Ring the bell for candles, Joan, and let us have tea, and an end to all this," said my aunt Diana ; " you know the proverb, ' a wilful man maun hae his way ; ' so, I suppose, must a wilful lass."

Meanwhile, as time passed on, the result of
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my secret grieving became daily more obvious. However much she wished it, my aunt Joan could not shut her eyes to the fact that I was grown pale, thin, and hollow-eyed, and that there was every day less chance of my attracting anyone.

Every conversation she held with me for the purpose of bringing me round to her views had diametrically the opposite effect. She seemed to me to be only adding another rivet to the chains that were already eating into my very flesh, and that I longed to throw off entirely.

The more she talked about the beauty of self-sacrifice, the more she assured me that, "if I married Harry Beauchamp, or any other person in a proper rank of life, and with an ample fortune, she would come and live with me, and help me to manage my house"—which I knew meant managing it for me—the more irrepressible became my desire to get away from her for ever—to work for my own living, to be free to marry, or not to marry, as I saw fit; and when married, to have only my husband to please, and not to have my love for him made the means of keeping me in her thraldom.

Well I knew how she would punish me if I presumed to assert an opinion of my own, even about the colour of a gown. I knew she would flatter my husband into thinking her perfection, as she had my poor father; and if I chanced to

offend her, take no apparent notice, but be more than commonly endearing and affectionate in manners to me in his sight, and secretly turn his heart from me, as she had turned my father's from my mother. I would rather have given up the man I most loved than had her the inmate of my home. I dreaded and loathed her.

Our neighbours called, and wondered what ailed me, and why I had lost my rosy cheeks. Then my aunt Joan, who had been lecturing and scolding me just before they came in, would fondly stroke my hair, or pat my face, and say,

“Yes, indeed, the poor child does look far from well; I think we must send her from home for change of air. I can't think what ails her?”

But as soon as they were gone she would break out into violent invective against my ingratitude for choosing to fret and grow ugly, when everything was done that could be done to make me happy, my aunt Diana joining in the reproach, till at last my aunt Theodosia would rise in a pet, saying,

“You tiresome girl, why can't you do as your aunts want you? I'm sick of this contention. Do go and put on your things, and let us go out walking.”

And I gladly threw aside my book or work, and ran upstairs, leaving her saying a few

words ; what, I knew not, but I guessed—threatening she would leave them if these ceaseless scoldings went on.

When we got outside the house she would say,

“Lizzy, I was forced to *seem* to join with them, or I could not have got you away, my dear. Now we’ll go out into the fields, and stay till dinner time ; I hope by that time they’ll not be quite so cross. It’s really dreadful !”

Those walks and the night watches were all I had of peace.

At last my aunt Diana said,

“Joan, it was settled long ago, I thought, that the girl should go out as a governess ; let her have her will, and go.”

“She shall !” responded my aunt Joan, bitterly.

CHAPTER IV.

MY aunt Joan was in the habit of paying a round of visits to friends living in the neighbourhood of London every spring. She went this year as usual, telling me, before she set off, that if I still desired to go out as a governess she would inquire among them for a situation for me. I thanked her, and said I hoped she would hear of one soon.

Shortly after her departure my aunt Theodosia received an invitation to visit a married niece, which she accepted.

“I must have a new shawl, and a gingham gown to travel in: we'll go to Nicholson's and look at some,” said she.

We went and tossed over a pile of goods, as ladies generally do; and after selecting a shawl for herself, my aunt The picked out a few of the cheapest, and turning to me, said,

“I'm as sick of the sight of that old painted rag as I was of ‘the Neville banner;’ so now, Lizzie, choose for yourself. I intend to give you a new shawl and a gingham gown, and per-

haps, now your aunt Joan is gone, we may be able to persuade your aunt Diana to let you wear them."

She spoke doubtfully, because my mother and various other relations had, at different times, sent me dresses as presents ; but my aunt Diana had invariably taken possession of them, and locked them up in her store-room, whence they never re-appeared. One single exception there was. When Lady Beauchamp, who was our cousin, came into the room one day with a paper parcel in her hand, and, unfolding it, said,

"Now, Mrs. Neville, I've brought Lizzie a batiste gown, and I expect to see her in it the very next time she comes to the Abbey."

I was permitted to have it made up.

Bright coloured shawls were then in vogue. I chose a pretty apple-green one, and a grey and lilac gingham. Aunt Theodosia had one off the same piece.

"I shall give you enough for two deep flounces, Lizzie," she said ; "I am determined that for once you shall look like other people."

When the parcel came home she unfolded it, and gave me my shawl and dress out. My aunt Diana came near, took the gingham out of my hands, and looked at it and at me, puckering up her lips with a curious expression ; then she said,

"It's neat, certainly. I'll lock it up with the

others. She can take the shawl upstairs, and wear it."

"But, sister, I bought her the gown to wear too, and I hope you'll let her have it made up."

"Liston will have enough to do to get your things ready this week and next, Theodosia, and the next week is washing week, and after that *I* want a gown making." She tucked the dress under her arm and carried it off.

"There never was such a woman as your aunt Diana," said my aunt Theodosia, querulously. "She whips up everything, and takes it to that storeroom of hers; and once there, nothing ever comes out. I daren't say any more to her, but I did hope she would let you have this gown made up when I asked her."

In a fortnight aunt Theodosia left us.

"Well, Lizzie, now you and I are left to ourselves," said my aunt Diana, as the chaise drove from the door, "we must try and be good company to one another. I daresay we shall get on very well together."

I opened my eyes wide. Were these bland words addressed to me?

The washing week over, my aunt Diana sent me to Nicholson's to choose her a new silk gown. I chose a rich, dark, purple silk, which suited her fair complexion; she was almost as fair as I

was then myself. It pleased her, and it was made up.

"Only, aunt Diana," said I, growing bolder as the lioness grew tamer, "you must not wear such ugly cap-ribbons with it."

"And, pray, what cap-ribbons do you wish me to wear?"

"Pearly white. They suit your complexion, especially when you wear that gown."

"Humph! Well, I want some cap-ribbons. Liston is going to trim me three caps. You chose the gown well; you may exercise your taste now on the cap-ribbons. Be off with you to Nicholson's. I want seven yards."

I went, marvelling at my own audacity, and her unwonted gentleness.

When I returned I found her unpicking a gown, and she asked me to help her, which I very willingly did. She cared little about dress, as she scarcely ever went out of doors, and never possessed more than three gowns at one time, which she denominated "Belle, Beauty, and Scrub." Scrub had been given to her maid on the purchase of the purple silk, and now Beauty was to be turned and degraded into Scrub. Alas! other beauties besides my aunt Diana's gowns undergo that sad fate in this work-a-day world.

All this time not a word of my dress. I never thought of it; graver thoughts filled my

head. Besides, it was in the store-room, and the case, therefore, was hopeless. Probably, had I begged for it I should never have had it.

But as I did not, down came my aunt Diana, on the morning after Beauty's renovation, with three of my locked-up gown-pieces in her hands, and desired me to choose which I would have made up first, and how I would have it made. Of course I chose aunt Theodosia's gift, and was sent upstairs to give my own orders respecting it, and told to put the other two in my drawers until the first was done.

They were all three made up like other people's, one after the other.

They were merely plain ginghams, but they were quiet in colour, and looked like a gentlewoman's morning dresses ; and I believe I was more elated by their possession than any other girl ever was by her first silk gown.

Next, an evening dress came out of the store-room, and that also was made.

Then I was ordered to select a new straw bonnet for myself. "Wonders," I thought, "will never cease!"

But that was not the greatest wonder, nor the pleasantest. My aunt Diana's manner towards me had utterly, entirely changed. She treated me with gentleness and tenderness, and seemed to find happiness in giving me pleasure.

Whether it was that, now I was seventeen,

she thought the season for probation was over, and considered me entitled to be treated like a woman, or that she pitied me for the disappointment of my young dream about Mr. Tracy, and thought I had been harshly used by my aunt Joan in that affair or that she saw my temper to be one that was more easily governed by kindness than severity, I cannot say; but as long as she lived she never resumed her former harsh manner towards me, nor ever said an unkind word to me, unless instigated to it by my aunt Joan.

There were deep wells of tenderness in that rugged soil, and one of them now gushed up for me; and green grass and pleasant flowers sprung up on what had been a blank, dreary, desolate waste.

"Well, Lizzie, you are not so very unhappy with the old tigress, after all?" said she, one day.

I laughed. Really, our days glided along so peacefully, so harmoniously, that if I had not known my aunt Joan would return, I should never have desired to leave Hilton. I forgot the "Neville Banner," and all former annoyances, in her present kindness, and tried to please her in every way—and she *was* pleased.

"I don't see," said she one day, "why we should not go a-visiting and enjoy ourselves, as well as the others? We will go to Barton."

She had not slept out of her own house for two years.

We went to Barton, and to Lady Graeme's, and, under the influence of kindness and sympathy, the light came back to my eyes, the colour to my cheeks. I did not resemble the cast-down, pale girl my aunt Joan had left behind her.

When we returned home at last, aunt Diana sent me to call on Lady Beauchamp.

The Miss Beauchamps were sitting at the open window, embroidering collars. "Who is this?" I heard Anne say, as I walked up towards the house.

"Why, it is—E—liz—a—beth!" cries Melusina, prolonging every syllable of my name in an accent of surprise; "Elizabeth! and dressed like other people! Come in, Lizzie, no need to go through the ceremony of being shewn in by Harrison and Co.," said she, advancing to meet and lead me through the open window into the library. "I am glad to see you looking so well, and dressed so nicely;" and the good-hearted girl took both my hands, and shook them affectionately. Anne rose, and gave me an equally kind greeting, when Melusina released me; and then they made me take off my large new hat, and admired the pale pink ribbon which trimmed it, and congratulated me again on looking like other people.

Now, when I went in to luncheon with them,

I was not ashamed to pass their servants, or sit down among their guests ; my toilette was of the simplest, cheapest materials ; but I felt *now* that I looked like a gentlewoman.

When I returned home, my aunt Diana asked me what the Beauchamps said of my appearance. I told her they approved of it, but withheld their congratulations on my “being dressed like other people,” for I thought that would annoy her.

But these pleasant days came to an end. My aunt Theodosia returned home ; of that I was glad. Not so when my aunt Joan wrote to fix the day for her return also.

My aunt Diana’s fair cheeks flushed with pleasure. Joan was her darling child ; on her she had centred all the love of her vehement, passionate nature. She sat with the letter in her hands some time, enjoying the happiness of knowing she held it, and that it was the pledge of her child-sister’s early return. Then she locked it up, and went upstairs to her own room—I believe to pray for her safe journey.

To me, my aunt Joan was harsh, unkind, and unjust ; but she had her good qualities. She was gratefully dutiful to the elder sister who had brought her up, and—as I often heard mysteriously hinted—made some great and extraordinary sacrifice for her sake. What this was I could not learn—even my aunt Theodosia, the only one I dared to question, replied,

"Don't ask questions. Young chits like you must not expect to be made acquainted with the affairs of your elders."

The love between the two sisters was boundless on the part of my elder aunt ; returned as a duty by my younger one. I say returned as a duty, because my aunt Joan's heart did not seem in her home. She was always talking of the sacrifice she had made in complying with my aunt Diana's wishes, and settling down in that remote country village. For a short period in her life she had mixed in the highest circles ; and that time of glory was ever looked back to and spoken of with fond regret. She loved to talk of the dukes and duchesses, earls and countesses, whose names had once figured on her visiting list, now, alas ! replaced only by those country squires and their wives.

To return to that society seemed her most ardent wish. I never could quite reconcile the affection she professed for my aunt Diana with the plans she used to form of what she would do when she and Theodosia were no more. There was a difference of thirty-five years between their ages, and it was natural she should expect to outlive them ; but it always struck me as strange that she should *talk* of doing so—of returning among her great friends after their death, as her pleasantest anticipation.

"Joan will be here on Thursday," said my

aunt Theodosia, looking up from her netting ; “ I suppose, Lizzie, we ought to feel glad, but I can’t say I am. We got on very well together, your aunt Diana, you, and I ; and now I imagine all the scolding will recommence.

She returned as bitter as ever ; and again my life became stale, flat, profitless, and dreary—only, in general, my aunt Diana held her peace, and found no fault with me—and if she did, it no longer sank into my heart as heretofore : in learning to love, I had ceased to dread her.

On one subject the scoldings ceased. Now that my clothes were made like other people’s, I heard no more of my awkwardness—my aunt Joan never called me Miss MacGawk, or Mademoiselle de la Gaucherie, any more.

The fact is, that while the flowing robes of ancient nations or the modern Asiatics would never make their wearers look ungraceful, our dresses, which have no innate elegance to recommend them, become perfectly absurd and vulgar as soon as they cease to be fashionable. The attire of Josephine and Marie Louise, with short waists and narrow skirts, would have made the most elegant woman in the county look awkward, if she had been compelled to wear it when all other women wore large hats or bonnets, long waists, and very wide full dresses, with flounces half a yard deep.

Not long since, I, and my husband, with whom

the reader has not yet the honour of being acquainted, came up to London in this present year, 1858.

As we walked arm-in-arm up Chancery Lane, we met two ladies—sisters, no doubt—in that very dress which I thought in my youth so elegant, when I saw it worn by Anne and Melusina Beauchamp. It was *then* the fashion.

They had white gowns, with broad worked flounces hanging, as they hung in those days, in ample folds to the figure, innocent of hoops and crinoline; and over them fell deep collars, in shape not unlike the neck and shoulders of a wax doll before it is sewn on to the body: round this gorget was a broad frill of work reaching nearly to their waists, which were encircled by belts and buckles; green silk handkerchiefs, loosely tied round the throat, and huge coal-scuttle bonnets, with immense high bows, stiffened by wire, completed their costume. There was nothing gaudy in it, nothing conspicuous in itself. They wore only two colours, white and green; but it was a by-gone mode, the make of every article was different to the present fashion. Nobody, save themselves, wore coal-scuttle bonnets with towering bows, or flounced white gowns, square gorget, frilled collars, and silk neck-handkerchiefs. Everybody else wore mantles or shawls over coloured dresses, and little bonnets à *L'Imperatrice*; and so

every man, woman, and child turned round to stare at them with as much curiosity as if they had been Chinese or Laplanders. They took no notice—probably they were women to whom some great grief had come early in life, and whose minds had ever since stood still, and not gone on with the world. They retained the dress they had worn when they were young, beloved, and happy ; and did not even see it was different from that in vogue now. But surely to dress a young girl, with warm, quick feelings, in a way that makes her appear as absurd as these two poor old ladies, was cruel—to scold her because she looked awkward in it, tyrannical and unreasonable.

I gained little by the cessation of remarks on my ungraceful movements. When did the powerful want pretexts for oppressing the weak ?

First, there were the interminable inquiries, whether I did not deem it my duty to sacrifice myself to her who had brought me up, and given me such a happy home for fourteen years ; and when I expressed my unwillingness to be immolated, there were groans, sighs, and lamentations on my unheard-of depravity.

Then, when my aunt Joan read aloud to us, as she often did, she was wont, on laying down the book, to ask my opinion of the characters in it. When I hesitated to give it, for fear of consequences, she forced it from me by a series of

cross-questions, that would have done honour to a leading counsel, and then exhausted all her powers of wit and sarcasm to prove I was wrong. She would not permit me to decline answering, or to remain silent. If I made no reply, and tried to avoid an argument, she harangued upon my stubborn obstinacy ; nothing would satisfy her but an acknowledgment that she was always right, and I always wrong in my opinions, and that acknowledgment I could not conscientiously give. If I had been worse than I was, if I had been a hypocrite, a mean, artful deceiver, who cared not what I said, I might have won her favour ; but she left me no loop-hole for escape. She did not permit me to take refuge either in silence or doubt ; she insisted on hearing my thoughts, and then quarrelled with me for thinking them.

How could we agree ? She was a woman of the world — shrewd, sophistical, artificial ; I young and full of romance, worshipping talent and virtue, believing that everybody was good, considering rank, fashion, and money as so much dross compared with true love.

We might have argued to eternity, and never come any nearer to each other's views.

There was another subject on which she delighted to dwell, because she knew it gave me intense pain. It was my mother. I had seen little of my mother—my aunt had herself removed

me from her at a very early age—and I had been so long separated from her, that she scarcely seemed to consider me as her child, but rather as my aunt Joan's. Still, I could not bear to hear her ridiculed and held up to scorn. It wounded me to the very quick to be taunted with her ignorance, her vulgarity, and her low birth—all which existed only in my aunt Joan's own mind. She was not a learned woman—the cares of a large family, and a small income, left her little time for reading; but she had strong natural good sense, a great deal of artistic taste (far more than my aunt Joan had) in regard to harmony of colours, and the arrangement of dress, or of a room, a vivid fancy, and a pure and just poetic feeling. I never knew her commit to memory or copy a piece of trashy verse; but she had intense enjoyment in really beautiful poetry. Early left motherless, she had been brought up at a fashionable school, where she was neglected, and had married young; but she was refined enough for her station in life. She was a good wife, a good mother, a good mistress, a good neighbour; charitable to the poor, and a sincere Christian. She was hasty, as I knew to my cost when with her, by many a slap and sharp speech; but she was not bitter and false like my aunt Joan. Finally, her birth was certainly fearfully low. How could a Beauchamp Neville

ever think of her? She was only—a physician's daughter!

Day by day these contests—unwilling contests on my part—went on, till my very soul was sick of argument and dispute, though my conscience forbade me to lie. Whether I replied to my aunt's reiterated questions, or whether I remained silent, signified not, the hail of sharp words fell, the fierce biting blasts of sarcasm chilled bone and marrow, and scorching irony, like forked lightning, seared and blasted every gentle feeling the kindness of my aunt Diana had aroused within me.

Again I craved freedom and peace, beat my wings wildly against the bars of my cage, and, like a new-caught bird, should have dashed myself to death against the wires, had not my captors opened the windows, set the cage door wide—and let me go free.

"I am quite sick of all this disputing," said aunt Theodosia querulously one morning. "We had none of it when Joan was away. Elizabeth, I half-wish you were gone."

"So do I, I'm sure, aunt The."

"It's ungrateful, too, of you, as Joan says," said aunt Theodosia fretfully.

I laid my hand upon her arm—she drew it away—so I bent down over her as she sat in her old seat by the window, netting, put my left

arm round her neck, and said, “Aunt Theodosia, have I ever been ungrateful to *you*? ”

“Not to me exactly—but Joan—”

“She is always cross and unjust to me, and you know it; you have often said so yourself. I shall be glad, very glad to leave her—sorry to leave you and aunt Diana. I shall often think, when I am away, of the walks we took together, and wish for you. You never taunted me, or reproached me or my mother. I always loved you. No, aunt Theodosia, I am not ungrateful.”

“Go away, you’re an ungrateful, graceless chit,” said aunt Theodosia, but her bright affectionate smile, and the playful tap she gave me with her netting-needle, belied her words.

A few days afterwards a friend of my aunt Joan’s wrote to say a Mrs. Stanley, residing in the county of Somerset, wanted a governess for her children. Inquiries were made on both sides, references exchanged, and I was engaged.

The Beauchamps called the morning I received Mrs. Stanley’s letter fixing the day of my departure. I saw them from the window, and rushed out to meet them.

“Oh! Melusina,” I exclaimed joyously, “I’m going!—aren’t you glad? ”

A cloud came over her frank, beautiful eyes.

“And do you say this to me, and ask me to be glad that I’m going to lose my friend? ” asked she, reproachfully.

My heart smote me. Surely I must be very ungrateful. I loved Melusina, and my aunts Diana and Theodosia, and yet the joy of getting away—for ever, as I hoped—from my aunt Joan, was so great, and filled my heart so utterly, as to leave no room for any regrets.

“I’m not glad to leave you, Melusina,” I began—“only glad to leave Hilton, and—” I stopped. What could I say? I had never complained to any one of my aunts—I did not like to begin now.

Perhaps Melusina guessed what I would not say. She put her arm lovingly within mine, and walked with me into the drawing-room.

“All young people like a change,” said she, softly.

Lady Beauchamp had entered, and been told of my intended departure, while Melusina and I were talking on the grass-plot.

“And how does Elizabeth like the thoughts of it?” said she.

My aunt Joan spared me the trouble of answering.

“She is like all young people, glad of a change; but I daresay she will be as glad to come back.”

Lady Beauchamp made no reply.

I suppose the most studied vengeance I could have taken would not have wounded my aunt Joan so deeply as the sight of my uncontrollable

joy. I tried to restrain myself, to move about the parlour gravely and soberly, but the moment I got outside the door, the irrepressible joy gushed out. I flew rather than ran upstairs—I seemed to have wings to my feet, to tread on air! When my boxes were packed and corded, I danced upon them. Hannah, who had been holding the candle for me, thought I was mad.

I was to start at five next day. It was a raw, cold, drizzly morning, when I came downstairs. I went into the drawing-room, where Hannah had spread the breakfast-table, and lit me a glorious fire. I had taken leave of all my aunts the night before, and having no one to talk to, I drew my chair close to the fender, and sat down to have a good warm, while John and Hannah got breakfast ready. The door opened behind me, and my dear little aunt Theodosia came in. She had got up that cold, cheerless morning, at that early hour, to make me a comfortable breakfast before I set off, and to see me once more.

Then the ice that had been gathering round my heart thawed. My tears fell thick and fast. Aunt Theodosia wept with me.

CHAPTER V.

I TRAVELED all that day and the next. My journey was performed by coach. Mrs. Stanley had written to the landlady of the inn where I was to sleep the first night, and requested her to take care of me, as I was a young lady, and wholly unused to travelling. I thought this so very kind, that it prepared me to like her; afterwards I ascertained she wrote by her husband's command.

The landlady, Mrs. Marsh, was a mother. She shewed me to a retired bed-room, and told me she and her family slept in that part of the house, and no strangers ever came near it. I asked for a fire and tea. The fire was lit, and I sat down to warm myself, and beguile the time as I might. I was too new to travelling to have thought of taking a book with me.

Of what consequence I felt myself as I ordered the chambermaid who lit the fire to bring me cold chicken, ham, and muffins; for I had travelled all day, and had a girl's appetite, sharpened by the keen bracing air from the hills.

When she was gone, I took out my purse and counted over my fortune. Twenty whole sovereigns!—and I had hardly ever had twenty shillings at one time before. The wealth of Croesus was nothing to mine. It was an El-Dorado—inexhaustible, like Fortunatus's purse. Still, I felt rather lonely; a little like Crusoe in his solitary dominions. I longed for my aunt Theodosia, or Melusina, or Constance De Vere. I stirred the fire, with an awful sense of my greatness; for it would have been as much as my life was worth to touch poker or tongs at Hilton. Then I walked about the room, looked out of the window upon the leads—not even a sparrow hopping about in front of it—resumed my promenade, and wished the chamber-maid would bring tea; I was tired of having nothing to do.

The door opened; I turned round joyfully—not my tea, but a comely young lady.

"Mamma sent me," she said, "to ask if you would favour us with your company to tea; you will see no one but her and my sister. She thinks it will be more cheerful for you than sitting here alone."

I was only too happy to accept, and gaily followed her downstairs, and instead of a dreary, solitary evening, I passed a very pleasant one.

Mrs. Marsh told me that if I set off at four next day I should reach Weston by seven or

eight o'clock, and if I went earlier I should have to wait several hours at an insignificant little town, where there was nothing to see, for the afternoon coach. If I chose to remain where I was, her daughter would shew me the cathedral next morning. I assented gladly; I had a passion for cathedrals, and no fancy at all for sitting four or five hours alone in an inn-parlour with nothing to do. At eleven o'clock we had an excellent supper, and then I went to bed, very tired and very happy, and slept the healthy, dreamless sleep of the young.

I breakfasted with my kind hostess and her daughters, and after breakfast we sallied forth. I was disappointed at first sight. What was their cathedral to ours near Hilton? But when I descended into its gloomy crypts, and traversed its spacious cloisters, I was reluctantly compelled to admit that though neither so lofty, so airy in its internal architecture, nor so highly decorated, in some things it excelled ours.

Then we went through the picturesque old town. I had some purchases to make. The first was a book, to while away the time in travelling, and I bought Kirke White's poems. I can never help laughing when I think of my second, it was so thoroughly girlish. My hair was so abundant I could hardly grasp it in one hand, and therefore I bought a wig (*Crêpée* curls were worn then) and my aunt Joan had

brought down from London a silk front, fastened on wires, which looked exactly like hair, and could not come undone. Katherine Howard and the Beauchamps had them to wear when they rode on horseback, while their own redundant tresses were carefully pinned up under their hats, so that they might come out in full curls and proper trim at dinner time; but I had no late dinners to dress for, and was going to keep school, not to ride on horseback.

My third bargain was some net-edging, and ribbon for two morning caps. I bought these on the same principle as the false front, to prove I was really *bonâ fide*—what my brothers used to tell me I was not—“a right-down grown-up woman.”

A little before four o'clock I asked Mrs. Marsh for my bill; she made some excuse—it should be made out presently. I asked a second time, and she positively refused to accept one farthing. I wished to pay her, but I felt that to urge the matter further would be to return her kindness by insult; so I thanked her very heartily and gratefully for her kindness, shook hands with her and her daughters, and got into the coach which was waiting at the door, and on the top of which my boxes were already placed.

There was nothing peculiarly interesting on my route. I was solitary tenant of the inside of the coach, and I wrapped myself closely up in

my shawls, and alternately glanced at the snowy landscape through the coach windows, and read Kirke White.

It was nearly nine when I reached Weston at last. I told the coachman I was going to the Rectory, and he replied it was only a few steps for his horses, and he would take me there. So I sat quietly in my corner till the other passengers had got their luggage and settled with coachy, and then he drove me to the door of my new home. He jumped down, rang the bell, lifted down my luggage, and, holding out his hand, asked me to "remember the guard and the coachman."

I did so, and he touched his hat with his whip, and told me emphatically, "I was a lady, and no mistake, and he knew it as soon as ever he clapped his eyes on me."

"A real lady, and a bonny one too," responded the guard as the coach drove off.

I was smiling to myself at this compliment, when a hearty voice behind me said,

"Miss Neville, I suppose?" I turned quickly, and saw a tall fine-looking man; he went on, "You have had a cold journey. John, take those trunks to Miss Neville's room. Come in, Miss Neville, and let me shut the hall-door, for it is piercingly cold here."

I followed him across the hall; he threw open a door, and the gleam of a well-lit room and

blazing fire sent a glow of pleasure to my benumbed, half-frozen limbs.

"This is Mrs. Stanley, Miss Neville," he said, apostrophising a lady who sat on one side of the fire, cosily ensconced in an arm chair.

I looked eagerly. I was anxious to see the sort of woman on whom my happiness was to depend.

She was tall, pale, and thin. A very small quantity of dark hair fell in thin damp ringlets around a hatchet-shaped face. She had no eyebrows; her eyes were light blue and fishy. No life or meaning was in them. She had a sharp-pointed and rather large Roman nose, and thin short lips, slightly curving downwards at the corners. Neither her countenance, nor a listless affected manner and a drawling pronunciation, put on to hide a coarse tone of voice and a vulgar idiom, impressed me favourably. I saw her at once to be one of those women who are always in a muddle. I judged her to be weak—I more than half-suspected her to be pettish. Had she been poor, she would have been a querulous, dirty slattern; as it was, she was only—Mrs. Muddle.

Why had Mr. Stanley married such a woman? Her face and figure showed—for mere beauty. She had, doubtless, been very pretty; but now youth was gone, there wanted the play of features, the soul, the expression, that can make even the old lovely.

She half-rose, languidly presented two fingers to me, and drawled out,

“ ‘Ow do you do, Miss Neville;” then re-seating herself in her chair, she closed her eyes for a moment, as if over-fatigued by such great exertion, and seemed to think her part as hostess fulfilled.

“ Come to the fire, Miss Neville,” said Mr. Stanley’s decisive voice, as his wife dropped her two fingers from my hand ; and he placed me a chair beside his own.

I turned to look at him. One feels so curious to see what kind of faces people with whom one is about to reside have, to form some guess, as it were, whether we shall find them persons to like. His was a re-assuring one, as he stood there confronting me with his hands resting on the back of the chair, and the fire-light flashing full upon his open, frank countenance.

He was a tall, broad-built, muscular-looking man. Strength marked every movement of that powerful frame. Strength of will and purpose sat in every line of the broad, massy forehead, and close-set, well-formed lips. Over his wide brow waved a heavy mass of blue-black hair. His eye-brows were thick, broad, and slightly arched ; his eyes, well cut, clear, and open, were deep blue, good-humour and joviality shone in them. I judged him to be one who took life easily and cheerfully, and rode as it were with

slackened reins, conscious that his grasp was firm, his seat secure in the saddle. In other words, that he let things take their own course, and that necessity alone roused him to exertion ; but that once aroused, once having made up his mind to any course of action, Mr. Stanley was a man whom it would be hopeless to attempt to turn. A pleasant smile played about his lips when he spoke, a pleasant light glanced in the dark blue eyes ; the tones of his voice were at once suave and cordial, there was something frank in them which told you the speaker was worthy of trust.

I liked him.

"This is my eldest daughter Georgiana," said he, patting the cheek of a tall girl who sat at the end of the table, "and one of your future pupils ; there are the others."

My glance followed his. Round the table, and by the fire, were grouped a set of children, of all ages and sizes apparently, from twelve years old downwards, all with their eyes wide open, staring at the newly-arrived governess : their name appeared to be legion. I was beginning to count them, when Mr. Stanley, guessing my thoughts, said, laughingly,

"They're not all here, Miss Neville, two are in the nursery, and four boys are at school ; but these you see are your pupils—they stayed up to see you."

"P'raps if your warmed, you would like to go up to your bed-room and take off your things before tea," said Mrs. Stanley, languidly. "Georgie, go and see if there's a good fire in Miss Neville's room."

"It's no use going to see—I *know* there is," replied Georgiana.

"Nevertheless, go and look, as your mother desires," said her father, and unwillingly she obeyed.

I looked at her as she pushed away her chair with an impatient movement, and crossed the room with a slouching, half-careless, half-defiant walk. Her features were good, but their expression was unpleasing. Over a lowering brow, with the same broad, arched, coal-black eyebrows as her father's, fell a cloud of the same blue-black hair, so carelessly arranged as to become a defect rather than an ornament. Discontent sat throned on the frowning forehead, in the heavy-lidded deep blue eyes, and on the sullen lips. The figure was unformed and ungraceful. Without seeing her face, only by her walk and attitudes, any observer might have known her to be out of temper. I did not like the looks of my new pupil at all. Presently she returned.

"It's just as I knew it was—the fire is a good one."

"Then light Miss Neville upstairs, and shew her the way," said Mr. Stanley.

She went, and I followed.

“ This is your room.”

Not a word more did she speak. She did not vouchsafe to offer to help me to pull off my wrappings, or ask if I would have hot water to wash my hands—or shew me the most trifling mark of attention. She put the candle down on the dressing-table, honoured me with a long, supercilious stare, and went downstairs again.

When I re-entered the sitting-room, I found her presiding over the tea-table. She handed me my cup in solemn silence, not shily, as if afraid to address me, but disdainfully, as if she did not think me worth speaking to. As to the little ones, they devoured large slices of bread and butter, and stared at me till I thought their eyelids would certainly split, they opened them so very wide.

“ What ba-ad tea this is, Georgie ! ” drawled Mrs. Stanley ; “ why didn’t you put more in the tea-pot ? ”

“ I emptied the canister ; ‘tisn’t my fault,” said Georgie.

“ And why didn’t you take care to refill the canister when you knew it wanted doing, Georgie ? ” asked Mr. Stanley, in a good-tempered tone.

“ And there’s no marmalade ! ” said Lucy, the second girl.

“ What a girl you are, Georgie ! ” said Mrs.

Stanley ; “you never think of anything. Go fill the canister, and fetch some more marmalade.”

Georgiana went, with an air which implied that to be found fault with was a thing of course, and excited no emotion ; it was the labour of going that she disliked.

“ Georgiana is so very careless ! I’m afraid she’ll give you a deal of trouble. We can’t tell what to do with ’er. She don’t seem to take to anything : neither looking after the ’ouse, nor books, nor work, nor nothink. As to Lucy ’ere—Titty we call ’er—she is an opening bud, ready to receive any impression,” said Mrs. Stanley, in what she conceived to be a fashionable drawl, and closing and unclosing her eyes several times while she spoke, in order to give expression to her face.

“ I doubt,” said Mr. Stanley, with a good-tempered smile, “ Miss Neville won’t make much of that, my dear. If you had told her that Lucy was quick or dull it would have been more to the purpose.”

“ Dull ! Mr. Stanley,” said the lady, opening wide her inexpressive, fish-like eyes, and then languidly closing them for an instant ; “ dull ! Mr. Stanley ! Tha-ank God, no child of mine was ever dull !”

Georgiana returned with the tea and the marmalade, and her mother, looking at her, went on :

"I 'ope you'll get on with Georgie, Miss Neville, though she's not fond of books and work, like my little Titty 'ere. Georgie's not so quick at learning as Lucy; but then we ain't all alike," said Mrs. Stanley, with a benevolent smile at her eldest daughter.

I looked at Georgiana. Not a muscle of her face moved. She was used to these comments.

"My third girl, Beatrice, 'as a great talent for music, Miss Neville. I think Beaty will play well. We always call 'er Beaty. I like pet names; they sound affectionate and youthful. Young people always give them to one another; and I'm young, though I '*ave* so many children. People tell me I look like Georgie's sister," said Mrs. Stanley, slowly closing her eyes and smiling languidly.

I could not echo the compliment. I was silent.

"Come, children," said the father, "it's nearly ten o'clock. High time you were all abed and asleep. You've done tea. Wish good night, and go."

"Georgie, you put Titty and Beaty to bed; they don't like being undressed by Ann," said Mrs. Stanley.

"Yes, and then put yourself to bed too, Georgie," added the father; "so you, too, had better wish good night." And accordingly the five sisters departed together.

We sat by the blazing fire a little longer, and Mr. Stanley questioned me as to my journey, and asked what I thought of the cathedral, and the quaint old town where I had slept the preceding night. I saw that, in a quiet, gentlemanly, unobtrusive manner, he was endeavouring to draw me out, and to form some judgment as to the capabilities of his children's future governess. What he himself said on each subject proved him to be a well-informed man. It was pleasant and improving to listen to him.

All this time Mrs. Stanley sat fidgeting ; anything like intellectual conversation bored her to death. At last she said, " My dear, it's 'alf-past ten o'clock, and Miss Neville must be sleepy. Do ring for prayers."

The Rector touched the bell, the servants entered. He read prayers in a clear, grave voice ; but, it struck me, rather as a matter of form than of actual religion. When we all rose from our knees, we wished one another good night. Mr. Stanley, in doing so, shook hands with me cordially. His wife said she would show me my room, for fear I should lose my way ; and we went upstairs together, leaving Mr. Stanley below. She entered my chamber with me, poked up my fire, "'oped I should rest well," and left me.

Thus ended my second day in the world—that world on which, as my aunt Joan said, " I had

chosen to fling myself," and in which I was henceforward to fight my own way.

I went to bed tired, but not depressed. My aunt Joan had drawn such dreadful pictures of the *hauteur* and coldness with which governesses were treated, that my reception by the Stanleys appeared warm in comparison with them. I looked round my comfortable bedroom, stirred my glowing fire, and thought that in life there must be always disagreeables mixed up with the sweets. I foresaw trouble with Mrs. Stanley and her eldest daughter. In Mr. Stanley I hoped to find a friend and adviser. Taking all in all, I would rather be here, honestly earning my own bread, than a dependent upon my aunt Joan at Hilton.

Next morning I arose early. I took from my trunk a clean white collar, and one of my pretty gingham dresses. I braided my long curls back from my forehead as neatly as I could, fastened my gown myself, tied on a little black silk apron, and descended to the room where we had drunk tea the night before, and which I now found to be the study. Mr. Stanley and the whole bevy of children were already there. On my entrance he rang for prayers, and while the servants were assembling he inquired how I had slept after my journey, and told me Mrs. Stanley was unwell—indeed, I should not often see her at breakfast. Georgie always made tea.

After prayers were over, the man-servant brought in a small tray covered with a napkin. Mr. Stanley cut several good-sized slices of ham from one on the table, and put them on a plate upon the tray, and Georgiana added a couple of pats of fresh butter, a roll, some dry toast, muffin, and a cup of tea; and having also poured out a cup for every person at table except herself, she took the tray up to her mother.

Presently she returned with the plate of ham in her hand.

"Mamma won't have ham to-day; she would like an egg."

"Very well; then boil one, Georgie," said Mr. Stanley, transferring the rejected ham to his own plate. "Three minutes and a half, mind—Mamma does not like it done either more or less; there is my watch."

Georgiana stood by the fire and boiled the egg. When it was done she took it upstairs, returned, and resumed her place at the breakfast table.

"Miss Neville will take some more tea, and so will I, Georgie," said her father. Georgie silently filled and handed us our respective cups; and then Lucy, and Beatrice, and Emma, and Julia, each applied for more, and had their wants attended to; and then Mrs. Stanley's bell rang twice.

"That's for you, Georgie—there's mamma's bell," said Lucy, pertly.

The doer of all errands rose and went. All this time she had not tasted her breakfast, and I wondered why Lucy could not have answered it, but of course I said nothing.

Georgiana came back with the egg, as she had before with the ham.

"Mamma says it's not boiled enough for her fancy, and you're to have it, Beaty. She will have some marmalade. I'm sure I boiled it exactly three minutes and a half."

"Never mind, Georgie; I know you did, for I looked at my watch when you put it in and when you took it out of the saucepan. - But never mind; take mamma some marmalade," said Mr. Stanley.

Georgiana put some on a plate, and carried it upstairs.

"It's a shame, so it is, that you should have an egg and we haven't," said Lucy and the two younger ones to Beaty. "Papa, I say, papa, mayn't Georgie give us each an egg out of the store-room when she comes downstairs?"

"If you wish it very much," said the indulgent father.

"Oh, we do—we like eggs so much. Don't you, Miss Neville?"

"Miss Neville can have an egg, or two eggs even, if she likes," said Mr. Stanley. "Here, Georgie," to his re-entering eldest daughter, "go fetch six or eight eggs out of the store-room.

Miss Neville and the children want some."

Again Georgie trotted off. When she brought the eggs, I insisted on boiling them, alleging she had not had any breakfast herself yet.

"Oh, Georgie always waits on ma and makes our tea ; she always has her breakfast last," said Lucy.

"And could not you help her to carry your mamma's breakfast, Lucy ?"

"Me!"

"Oh, Lucy's such a child, she'd break and upset everything," observed Mr. Stanley.

Georgie had just raised her teacup to her mouth when Mrs. Stanley's bell rang twice.

"That's for ma's second cup," said Beatie ; and Georgie, as before, rose to answer the summons.

"Surely Lucy could have fetched the empty cup and saucer, and saved Miss Stanley a little running up and downstairs ?" said I.

"Oh, she'd break it ; she's only eleven. Besides, Georgie don't mind ; she's used to running about. Mrs. Stanley is not strong, and Georgie has waited upon her ever since she was ten years old," replied the father.

After Georgie had taken up the second cup of tea to her mother she was allowed to get her own breakfast in peace, with only one other interruption—going to fetch the tray downstairs when Mrs. Stanley rang again.

When the meal was over, Mr. Stanley proposed to induct me into the school-room, while Georgie went to receive mamma's orders about the dinner, and transmit them to the cook.

It was a pleasant, cheerful room, with two sashed windows looking on the lawn. Now, the flower-beds were roughly dug up, heaps of long litter covered the delicate plants, and sticks of various sizes marked the spots where deciduous ones stood. Nothing looked fresh or green, but the smooth even turf, and the glossy evergreens that fenced it in. Beyond, in the distance, sloped a valley, bounded by a range of irregular hills on one side; and among the trees I could discern the spire, and, when the sun shone brightly, the roofs and windows, of the little town of Burton, through which I had travelled the day before. It must be a beautiful place, I thought, in summer, when the setting sun gleams on those dark hills, glances on spire and casement till they sparkle like huge rubies, and floods the sky with molten gold; and when those beds are all full of sweet-scented, brilliant flowers, glittering in the light.

But I had not time to admire it long, for Mr. Stanley, placing a chair for me, took one himself also.

"I want to talk to you about the children, Miss Neville," said he. "Georgie, especially, is

very backward—far behind most girls of her age. Mrs. Stanley is much distressed about it."

"I am not surprised at her backwardness," replied I, quietly.

"Not surprised! Why? Does she strike you as dull?"

"Not at all, sir; but Miss Stanley appears to me to have no time for improvement, if I may judge by last night and this morning."

"No time? I don't understand you."

"I mean, Mr. Stanley, that if Miss Stanley is always running up and downstairs, she can have no time to study her lessons."

"That's true," said Mr. Stanley, with a puzzled look; "but then, I don't know how it is to be avoided. Mrs. Stanley is a great invalid, and who so proper to wait upon her as her eldest daughter?"

"But, sir, might not the others take their turn? You say Miss Stanley has waited on her mother ever since she was ten years old, and Lucy tells me she is nearly twelve. She is old enough to help her sister, and so is Beatrice. Pardon me, sir, but I think it would be a good thing for them to learn to be useful as well as Miss Stanley."

Mr. Stanley thought. "I believe you are right, Miss Neville," he answered, after a few moments' silent consideration of what I had said. "It never struck me before. But, I suppose,

when once Georgie sits down to her lessons she is not interrupted. If she is, it must be put a stop to, somehow or other ; or else, as you truly say, she *cannot* have time to learn. Go on with your instructions for a week, and then make your report to me on the subject ;" and with these words he rose from his chair and quitted the room.

I desired the children to collect all their books, and bring them to me, that I might see what they had been accustomed to learn with their last governess.

Lucy and the two little ones obeyed. Beatrice opened the piano.

"I always play first," said she. "Miss Scott, our music mistress, says I shall play a great deal better than Georgie."

"But just now you will do what I desire you," said I, going to the piano, and shutting it down.

"I always practise first," repeated Beatrice, beginning to cry ; "ma likes me to."

"I will speak to your mamma on the subject," said I, firmly and authoritatively ; "but now I must examine both you and Lucy, to know what you have learnt. I suppose you do not wish me to think you can do nothing but play a few little tunes on the piano ?"

This roused the child's pride. She went and fetched her books, intent on showing me she

could do as well as Lucy. I found both had been badly taught, and were very backward for their ages. I marked out their several tasks, and told them to sit down and study them. Then I looked up to the clock on the mantelpiece. It was eleven, and Georgiana had not made her appearance. Half-an-hour afterwards she entered the school-room, with a slow, unwilling step, and a cloudy brow.

I requested her to bring her books.

"Where is your French exercise book?" I asked.

"I never wrote any exercises; ma and Miss Benson, our last governess, agreed they were no use."

"What did you do, then?"

"I read aloud to Miss Benson, and learnt verbs and grammar, and geography lessons."

"Well, let me hear you read this tale in 'Les Veillée's du Château.'"

She commenced—true English French, in which every "n" is sounded as if it had a "g" after it.

"Georgie," said I, "that will never do; your French reminds me of an English usher in a school at Boulogne, who is said to have gone up to the head-master to complain of one of the boys in these terms: '*Monseer, cet anfang au fing de la bang, ne fait rien que de catchez des flies.*'"

Georgiana could not help laughing—still there was sullenness in the tone in which she replied,

“Miss Benson taught me to pronounce ‘enfant’ as ‘anfang,’ and ‘donc’ as ‘dong’—and *she* had been in Paris.”

“I never was out of my own country,” replied I; “but my aunts, who taught me, resided several years in Paris, and speak the language like natives. I know their accent is pure, for the Comtesses de Mirabeau have often been staying at our house, so that I could compare my aunt’s accent with theirs. I heard the Comtesse Anastasie laugh at the vulgar English, who call ‘banc’ ‘bang;’—she told me the story I have just repeated to you.”

The mention of the Comtesse Anastasie de Mirabeau rather took down Georgiana’s pride. She coloured violently, and tried to avoid adding a “g” to words ending in “n” for the rest of the lesson.

Then I desired her to write an exercise.

“Ma and Miss Benson say exercises are no use; I learnt on the Hamiltonian system.”

“Of the advantages of which you have just given me a notable instance. Miss Stanley, may I remind you that I am the governess, and you are the pupil? It is my part to direct your studies, and yours to follow my instructions. Begin the first exercise.”

Very slowly and unwillingly she arose, got paper, pen, and ink, and commenced. Before the exercise was half finished the door opened, and the nurse entered.

"Miss Georgie, missis desires you'll go out with Ann and the baby, and Master Charles. I've got baby's frocks and a few other things to wash out, and missis doesn't like the children being trusted alone with Ann."

Georgiana, nothing loth, threw down her pen, and escaped the exercise.

"Oh, I want to go out wis Sharly and baby ; mayn't I go out, Miss Neville ?" said little Emma.

"Oh, yes, Miss Benson always let us !" said Julia.

"Not till you have finished your lessons, my dears ; then we will all go out together."

Symptoms of crying came on immediately, and the nurse disappeared, to return presently with—

"Missis thinks a walk would do Julia and Emma good, Miss Neville, as it is such a fine day ; and she says I am to put on their things, and send them with Ann."

Lucy and Beatrice, now left alone, declared "it was a shame, so it was, that they two should be kept in school, when all the others went out walking." They gave no attention to their lessons — stood cross-legged while repeating

them, fidgeted, yawned, twisted, and put in requisition all those innumerable modes of annoyance which naughty children inflict upon teachers whom they wish to provoke; but as I had determined not to be provoked, and took no notice of anything short of absolute disobedience, the lesson and the morning came at last to an end, without an open quarrel.

"It is twelve o'clock now," said I, "go put on your things, and we will walk to meet your sisters."

I do not intend to inflict upon my readers all my experiences as governess in the Stanley family. I give a part of it, because that family is the type of a very large class of houses, where there is no order and no regularity, and where insensibly, owing to the real or fancied illness of the mother, or to want of reflection and consideration, the eldest daughter sinks into a mere household drudge, at the beck and call of its youngest member; nay, even of the very servants, who thus revenge upon her the orders they are at other times obliged to receive from her. And yet in all these households the eldest daughter is blamed for not improving herself.

Governors of other human beings, whether emperors, ministers, or parents, are too apt to imagine they can do no wrong, and that it is the duty of the governed to accept injustice

and be thankful. Pity that the latter should always be blind to this fact. But as they are so, it would be well if the administrative powers sometimes sat down to consider whether they were exercising their authority beneficially for those under them, and for themselves. Politics are not a woman's forte, I eschew them; but to parents I, a parent, speak.

I know that you desire, above all things, that your children should be prosperous, good, and happy, and that they should be affectionately united to one another, and tenderly dutiful to you. All these right wishes you frustrate if you make any one of them a slave to the others.

There are plenty of fashionable novelists for fashionable people. To them I do not address myself. It is not needed. The evil I wish to do away with exists chiefly among the less wealthy class of society. I have seen it with my eyes in other families besides the Stanleys, and I say and know that in English middle-class families the elder daughter is too commonly made a slave.

It is her duty to assist her parents. Granted. But is it not the duty of the younger children to do so likewise? Why is all the work to be thrown on the eldest? I have known that family drudge sent at three and twenty from the dinner-table, to deliver a message, because

the other two girls, aged sixteen and fourteen, were “too young,” the father said, “to carry one properly :” nor did they choose to do so while the elder sister remained at home.

This unhappy plan destroys all family affection. The eldest girl secretly looks upon herself as a slave, and pines to marry to get away from a life of drudgery. The younger ones consider her in the light of an upper servant, whose duty it is to work for them, and despise her. They hate her because she is in some sort set over them as a nursery governess ; and grow up with the idea that she is ill-tempered, because she has been obliged, contrary to her own inclinations, to hear their lessons, to see that they kept their drawers tidy and mended their clothes ; and to walk one way with them when they wanted to walk another. They speak of her as “that cross old thing,” and often, nay generally, prevent her marrying. The world takes the part of the younger sisters. Such pretty girls cannot be “jealous ;” but I have seen far more younger sisters jealous of elder ones, than elder sisters who were jealous of the younger. I have seen more than once the lives of elder sisters rendered utterly miserable by the sneers, the temper, and the ill-nature of younger ones, conscious that their youth and beauty would enable them to taunt their faded, care-worn sister with impunity, both in the

eyes of parents and visitors. The result may be imagined. By slow but certain degrees the elder sister loses her love for the little child she has carried in her arms as a baby, saved her money to buy toys for, petted and caressed a thousand times, and nursed through many an illness, in her angry and wounded feelings towards the young woman who ridicules her both before her face and behind her back, whose pleasure it is to mortify and to pain her.*

“I love Clarissa now, but when we were children Rose and I—indeed all of us—quite hated her,” said a lady once to my aunts.

“Why?” asked my Aunt Joan.

“Oh! because she was set over us, to take us out walking, and to hear us our lessons. You may depend upon it, Joan, that it is bad economy to make the elder girl governess to the younger. It destroys all affection between sisters. I have seen it done in many families where I visited, and I never knew one case in which it did not destroy family union.”

This lady was a married woman when she thus spoke, and both she and her elder sister were remarkably gentle, amiable women, or the painful past would not have been forgotten in love. But Clarissa, when she grew up, left her father’s house against his expressed will,

* For the truth of this see Mary Howitt’s admirable tale of “The Elder Sister.”

and went to reside with a friend, who ultimately left her a large fortune. She had learned to hate her home.

In the afternoon I and my pupils re-assembled in the school-room. Georgiana was soon sent for to nurse the baby, while Dawson ironed frocks, and Ann amused Charlie. At the end of an hour baby went to sleep, and she returned to her tasks. Presently Ann brought a message, "that Miss Georgie must make her ma some tea, and carry it upstairs." The doing this took half an hour. In the course of the hour that remained she was sent for four different times.

"Mamma says I can do my lessons in the evening," said she, the last time she returned. I thought this hard; I had calculated on having the evenings for myself. However, I soon found Georgiana's lessons were confined to an hour's practising. At six the whole family drank tea together, and Mrs. Stanley objected to my returning to the school-room afterwards. "It was useless," she said "to keep fire and candle alight for one person—why could not I sit in the same room as the family?—a great many young women in my position would feel flattered by the invitation to do so?"

A great many mothers besides Mrs. Stanley think governesses ought to be able to teach everything by intuition, and require no time for

self-instruction. A great many besides Mrs. Stanley expect them to fill up the intervals of teaching by making, mending, and altering children's clothes; though they were not engaged to do it, and though it compels them to put out their own needle-work.

"Well," such a mother will say, "what of that? I give her a good salary, she can afford to get her dresses made out."

Madam, out of that salary she has to save a sum to support her in sickness and old age. She cannot save much, for you expect her to dress respectably. You have no right to diminish by one farthing the small sum it is in her power to lay by.

Thank God! that during the years I was employed in tuition I never met anything like the cruel ill-treatment I have personally known other governesses experience.* Yet there were diffi-

* It is not above two or three years since a lady brought a young girl in a state of stupor from illness to a railway carriage, paid her fare, and gave money to the guard to pay her passage by steamer to Boulogne. On landing she was carried in a dying state to an inn, undressed, and put to bed. Seven pounds were found sewn into her stays; and some letters in her pocket, which gave a clue as to her relatives. Her brother was telegraphed for, and arrived a few hours after her death. She had been governess in the family of a lady in London, who on her falling sick took this way of getting rid of her. The whole story appeared in the *Times*, but the name of her employer was mercifully withheld. No matter, it will be proclaimed when the secrets of all hearts are revealed. A governess I knew broke

culties in my position at Mrs. Stanley's which my youth and inexperience rendered me unable to cope with. I was naturally averse to making any complaints of Mrs. Stanley to her husband ; and yet, unless I frankly stated the circumstances in which I was placed with regard to my pupils, they could make no improvement, and all the blame would fall on my inefficiency as a teacher. I resolved to avoid naming Mrs. Stanley, and to confine myself to a plain statement of facts.

her arm. No doctor was called in for a fortnight. When one came he ordered leeches. She had to put them on herself, with her left hand. No one helped her. She lived in "a pious family."

CHAPTER VI.

THE week ended ; Mr. Stanley called me into the school-room one morning directly after breakfast, and, sending the children to play in the nursery till they were wanted, demanded my report.

He wished to examine their books, and see what they had learned in that time.

“ Is this all ? ” said he, with a look of disappointment ; “ why, Georgiana has done nothing ! ”

“ It was impossible she could do more, sir,” I replied, “ when she was never more than an hour in the school-room at one time ; and rarely that.”

“ Where was she ? ”

“ I do not know. Attending, I believe, to Mrs. Stanley, or the baby.”

“ To come to the point, how many hours a day did she spend at her lessons ? ”

“ Always one hour in the evening at her music—I cannot say at other times, she was so continually sent for. That is all she has done, or could do, in the time. I do not wish to complain, but you asked the question.”

“ I did, and wanted what I have got, a straight-

forward answer. Now for the younger ones ; are you satisfied with them ? They, at least, are under your control ? ”

“ Not exactly, sir.”

“ How so ? ”

“ Nurse often fetches the two youngest for a walk, before they have done their short lessons ; and then Lucy and Beatrice want to go too, and become restless and dissatisfied.”

“ I should have thought the absence of the two little ones during a part of the school-hours would have been a boon ? ”

“ Yes, sir, if they only went when their lessons were over ; but as they are fetched before they are finished, or in the middle of a lesson, they feel I have no authority over them, and pay no attention to what I say.”

“ It shall be remedied. Have you any other observation to make ? ”

I hesitated, coloured, and looked down. Mr. Stanley saw it.

“ Speak out,” said he ; “ it is best.”

“ Then, sir, Miss Stanley is now fifteen ; if I am to continue fit to teach her, my improvement must keep pace with hers. I hoped, after the duties of the school-room were over, to be at liberty to improve myself.”

“ Who hinders you ? ” said he.

“ Mrs. Stanley disapproves of my staying here alone, wasting fire and candle, instead of joining

the family party in an evening ; and she likes me to help to make and mend the children's clothes, which formed no part of my engagement. If all my time is occupied, I must put out all my own needlework, and that will run away with a quarter's salary. I should be very glad to join the family circle part of the evening, but I hoped to have time to keep my own wardrobe in repair, and to improve in drawing, and other things in which I feel my deficiency."

" You are quite right," said he.

" There is one thing more, Mr. Stanley, which I should like to say, if I felt sure you would not deem it an impertinence."

" Go on ; I wish to hear all you think."

" I hope you will not be displeased, sir. I speak because I feel it right. I think it a pity Miss Stanley should be sent all the errands of the house. She thinks herself made a slave of, and her younger sisters despise her, and look upon her as an upper servant."

" Miss Neville, I do not see how that can be avoided in Mrs. Stanley's delicate state of health"—Mrs. Stanley ailed no more than I did, but by continually talking of her bad health, she had brought her husband to regard it as a fact—" Georgiana is the eldest daughter, and the others are too young to deliver a message correctly, or go on an errand."

" Pardon me, sir ; I have often sent them to

fetch things from my bedroom. They do not take the trouble to deliver a message correctly, I know, because they prefer to see Georgiana sent with it ; but that they can take one if they please, I have repeatedly proved. I think—I hope you will pardon me—but I think Miss Stanley's position in the house is equally injurious to her and to her sisters. They look upon her as born to attend upon them, and she thinks she is treated harshly. It would do Lucy and Beatrice great good to take a few of her errands off her hands."

"I will think about it, Miss Neville. I see there must be many reforms, or there can be no improvement in the children."

The following Monday at breakfast time Mr. Stanley promulgated his command, that Georgiana should enter the school-room every day at nine, and not leave it again until twelve. Further, when Mrs. Stanley's bell rang as usual at breakfast time, he desired Lucy to answer it, telling her it was high time she learnt to make herself as useful as Georgiana had been, and that she and Beatrice must now take it in turns to carry up mamma's breakfast, while their elder sister made tea, so that the meal might be sooner over. Lucy and Beatrice did not look pleased, but papa's word was law, from which there was no appeal. They were found perfectly compe-

tent to carry up a tea-tray, or even a message.

After breakfast Georgiana was sent to receive and transmit to the cook her mother's orders for the day; and at nine o'clock Mr. Stanley himself *saw* that she joined me in the school-room.

The nurse was forbidden to fetch any of the children until I rang for her. Mr. Stanley thought two hours' confinement enough for the two youngest ones. At eleven, unless in disgrace, they were to go out walking with the nurse. Lucy and Beatrice were to remain at their studies till twelve, and then go out with me if it was fine; if not, to go and romp in the nursery.

My authority thus strengthened by the father's, I had a chance of doing something with them. They became more respectful in their manners, and their lessons were better learnt.

But out of the school-room, and often in it, Georgiana gave me great trouble. All her movements were awkward, her manners were unpleasant and supercilious, her whole appearance careless and slovenly. She would have a sandal on one foot, none on the other, and a torn or soiled frock. Her collar was generally put on crooked, and her hair was always tangled, rough, and hanging about her face and neck in wild disorder. Now that she had time to attend to her person, she was just as untidy as when she was really harassed to death by running perpetual errands,

and had all the cares of the household on her young shoulders. She still looked the family drudge. She was not fond of reading anything but a story, she took no interest in her lessons, and she treated me with a familiarity bordering upon insolence.

Mrs. Stanley, who had of course been greatly displeased at all the reforms I had been the means of introducing, remarked daily that she saw "no improvement in Georgie, notwithstanding all the fine new ways."

"I suppose that's the first cap you ever wore?" said Georgie to me one day, when I came down to breakfast in my cap and *crêpé* front, in order to look as old and dignified as possible; "and I daresay the wig was your aunt's. Now, I suppose you think you look very womanish—but you're only two years older than me. I know your age, for I heard ma talking to papa about you before you came."

I do think school-girls have a positive genius for saying disagreeable things. My age was precisely the subject I was most tender upon, because I felt my youth and inexperience unfitted me to be the governess of an unsubdued girl of fifteen. I was always endeavouring to look old and grave, and Georgiana saw and quizzed my efforts.

I seated myself at the breakfast-table in dignified silence, and made my audacious pupil no reply.

What was more provoking still was, that there was a flickering smile in Mr. Stanley's blue eyes, as he glanced from the newspaper, in which he affected to be absorbed, to my cap and wig.

I tried to win Georgiana in every way : for some time without effect. She abhorred exertion, and I exacted it—how could she like me ?

By-and-bye her difficulties lessened—the path grew wider, smoother ; she saw that the rough roads of learning led to valleys full of fruits and flowers, and green pleasant shades. After three months' steady application to French she perceived that there was use in all those exercises and dictations ; her ear became familiarized with its accent, her mind with its idioms : she read it with as much ease as English. She had improved, too, in music ; for which, I felt convinced, she had a real talent, though of course I was not her teacher, since I did not play.

Mrs. Stanley said derisively, “ Georgie would never do more than strum ; Beaty was the musician of the family, and Miss Scott, the music-mistress, agreed with her.”

I thought Miss Scott taught badly, and wished Georgiana had a good master. Mr. Stanley heard me say so.

“ What master would you recommend, Miss Neville ? ”

"Mr. Salt ; he taught the Miss Molesworths, and they play beautifully ; I heard them play the night they drank tea here."

"So they do," said he ; "I think it would be a good plan to have him."

Mr. Salt was engaged, and Miss Scott dismissed. Mrs. Stanley chose to be present the day he gave his first lesson.

"Georgie 'as no ear for music," said she ; "but Beaty will play sweetly."

"Let me hear what you can do, Miss Stanley," said Mr. Salt.

She opened her book, and played some piece, I forgot what.

"Stop," said Mr. Salt, when she had played a page, "that is all wrong."

"I told you Georgie 'ad no taste," observed Mrs. Stanley.

Mr. Salt, without replying, played the passage over again. Georgiana listened like one spell-bound.

"Try and play it in the same way," said he.

She began. Of course she soon broke down, but she had caught style, touch, expression ; she shewed that the talent was there, but not the manual dexterity necessary for displaying it. Mr. Salt turned round to Mrs. Stanley :

"Your daughter has been very badly taught ; but she will make a splendid performer, *if she takes pains.*"

Georgiana coloured with pleasure up to her very ears. Music was her passion ; the only thing she really liked, and her mother had always said she had no taste for it.

Mrs. Stanley replied in a voice of pique,
“I’ve always ‘eard Miss Scott was considered a good mistress.”

“Miss Scott!” said Mr. Salt ; “I have had pupils of hers before. I have always found I had to unteach them all she had taught. You heard how Miss Stanley played that piece ; did it sound like this ?”

He played it from beginning to end, giving each note its true time and expression. Mrs. Stanley had a correct ear.

“Ah !” said she, “that is not as Miss Scott played it ; it is very different. I thought it mere common child’s music ; I now see it is very beautiful.”

“No music would be beautiful if played incorrectly as to time, and without any attention to the spirit of the composition, to what painters call light and shade, for on those the whole harmony of the piece depends,” said the master.

Mrs. Stanley was a perfect Mrs. Malaprop. She delighted in a fine phrase or a long word. Mr. Salt’s illustration completed the conquest his fine playing had begun. She was quite satisfied with Miss Scott’s dismissal, and noted his observations down for use on some future

occasion. Not long after I heard her telling Mrs. Best, the curate's wife, that she was afraid she must part with her cook:

"For," said she, "if I give 'er a receipt, she pays no attention to the spirit of the composition — to what painters call 'light and shade.' She sent me up a bread-and-butter-pudding the other day with all the currants at one end; and when she makes a veal-pie, she never arranges it 'armoniously, but puts all the eggs in one corner, and all the force-meat-balls in another. Sometimes 'er soups are so salt we can't eat them, and sometimes they've no taste at all."

"Servants are great plagues, I think," returned Mrs. Best. "We were staying at the sea-side when we were from home, and we had a wretched cook in our lodgings."

"And how did you like Sea Marsh?" asked Mrs. Stanley.

"Not at all. It's a wretched, dull place, and has not even pretty scenery to recommend it; I was heartily glad to come home."

"Well," drawled Mrs. Stanley, "but, after all, you ought not to complain, for you 'ad shrimps and other little perquisites to make up for the dulness."

"Ah!" replied Mrs. Best, as she rose to depart, "I should require more perquisites than

shrimps to make me like such a dull, flat, level, uninteresting coast as Sea Marsh."

"How industrious you are, Miss Neville!" said Georgiana, looking up one day from her work; "you might be embroidering that collar for a wager."

"Yes," said I, quietly; "I want it finished," and I worked on. I had great projects of what that collar was to achieve. It was done at last, and sent to the wash. When it came home I sat up one night in my bedroom, made up a pretty pink bow, affixed it to the collar, and laid both carefully away in my drawer.

A day or two afterwards, as I was bending over her French dictation, to see if she was spelling a word correctly, I said, "You have beautiful hair, Georgiana, if you did not do it so badly. I wish you would let me dress it for you this evening; you know Mr. and Mrs. Best are coming to tea."

"Oh! my hair; I can't do it well—I've no taste, as ma says."

"Not for hair-dressing certainly, Georgie; or perhaps it is like your musical taste—undeveloped. You may be found some day to have a latent talent even for dressing hair."

She laughed. Her face was pleasant when she smiled, and now she smiled often. Since she had ceased to be the family drudge, and

discovered that she could get through her lessons without such very great labour, her countenance had begun to lose the sullen, hopeless, careless expression that had characterised it. “Come to my room at half-past five,” I went on; “I shall be dressing then, and you can fasten my gown, and save Ann the trouble.”

My arms were lithe and pliant; I could fasten my dress behind perfectly well; but I knew that if I asked Georgiana to do it, it would ensure her coming to my room. She had begun of late to show an interest in my looking well.

She came at the appointed time, with two bouquets in her hand—one for me, the other for herself. She had put on the dress she usually wore in an afternoon—a plain white gown, made high up to the neck; but her hair was as slovenly and untidy as usual.

I made her sit down, turning up the glass that she might not see what I was doing; but she never thought of looking—she had heard so much of her awkwardness, her ugliness, that she did not care about her appearance. She began to talk, and to untwist and comb out her rich tresses of blue-black hair. She wore it in large heavy curls in front, and a shapeless twist behind. I plaited the long black hair, and fastened it up in a knot, after the fashion of a Greek statue. I braided the thick ringlets so as to leave her beautiful forehead and flexible arched eyebrows

bare, and to develop the graceful *contour* of her head and throat. Then I went to my drawer, pulled out the collar I had worked and adorned with the pink bow, and fastened it round her neck.

"Now, Georgiana," said I, pulling down the looking-glass, "look at yourself, and tell me what you think of *my* talents for hair-dressing."

She glanced carelessly at the mirror; then an expression of surprise and pleasure flushed into her face, as she saw the graceful form it reflected.

"I don't know myself," said she naively. "How much better I look! And that pretty collar, too. How kind in you to lend it me!"

"It is not a loan, Georgie," said I; "I worked it for you. I wanted you to see what a fine-looking girl you might be if, as Mr. Salt said, 'you took pains' with yourself."

Then I finished my own toilette; and while I did so, she stood talking to me, ever and anon casting a glance of innocent gratification at the mirror.

"I am making acquaintance with myself, Miss Neville," said she, as she caught my eye after one of these glances.

"So I perceive, Georgie, and I hope you will never drop the acquaintance."

We went down to the drawing-room together. I saw her father give a glance of startled surprise, which changed to a smile of pleasure, as she entered. Mrs. Stanley said,

"Law! Georgie, 'ow queer you've done your 'air!"

"I never saw her look so well before!" exclaimed Mr. and Mrs. Best, in one breath, as she advanced to shake hands with them.

Several times that night I saw Mr. Stanley's eyes turn on her with a gratified expression, and I felt proud of my work. When she bid him good night, after the visitors had departed, he called her back as she was leaving the room, gave her a second kiss, and whispered something in her ear, at which she smiled and blushed. I took my candle and went to my own bedroom. Georgie bounded in almost immediately afterwards.

"Oh! Miss Neville," said she, "Papa says he hopes he shall always see me look as I looked to-night, and he gave me half a sovereign to buy pink bows, or what I liked, with."

"No, Georgie, not pink bows," I said. "I have often heard your father complain of your untidy hair when you rode out with him. You must buy a black straw riding-hat like Melusina Beauchamp's, and I will trim it for you. I saw one in the village yesterday."

The next day we bought the hat, and I trimmed it during afternoon school. We also contrived to buy a dark-blue silk handkerchief out of the half-sovereign. The very morning afterwards Mr. Stanley put his head in at the school-room door.

"Miss Neville, I am going to ride to Burton this morning; I should like Georgie to go with me. Can you spare her?"

I assented gladly. "She has done her lessons so well for some time, she deserves a holiday, sir."

"Has she? I am glad to hear it. Make haste and get ready," said the pleased father.

"I will go and help her. I can be spared here; Lucy and Beatrice have their lessons set them, and the little ones are learning their spelling." I went, and saw that the hair was properly fastened up, and tied on both the hat and the new blue cravat, as Melusina wore hers; and then descended with Georgie. She looked so well that I was quite mortified Mr. Stanley did not notice it; but he merely rose from his seat, patted Julia and Emma on the head, and bade them say good lessons, and remarking, "You have not been long in putting on your habit, Georgie," strode out of the room, followed by his daughter.

He was a little behind time in his return, and we had to wait dinner for him. As it was bringing up, and while Georgiana was upstairs changing her dress, he approached me, and said confidentially,

"I don't know whether it's the new hat, or the new style of doing the hair, or what you've done to Georgie, Miss Neville, but she is not

like the same girl she was when you came. I declare to you, that when she had got a colour with riding, every man in Burton turned round to look at her."

What father is there that is not proud of a beautiful daughter?

This was the bright side of the medal. It had its obverse. Mrs. Stanley was by no means so well pleased with my improvement as her husband. She could not forgive my having interfered with the family arrangements; so far as to secure Georgiana's regular attendance in the school-room, and persisted in thinking herself ill-used and neglected, in which belief she was strengthened and encouraged by her confidant, the head-nurse, Dawson, who had found it a great relief at times to set Miss Georgie to nurse the baby and look after the little ones; and who was highly indignant at being told none of the children were to be interfered with when in the school-room with me. Then Mrs. Stanley liked to be thought young, and the more Georgiana improved in manner and appearance, the more womanly she looked; the more of necessity must people think her old, since she was the mother of a daughter so nearly grown up. Mrs. Stanley wanted to put Time's clock back, not forward; and she laid all these misfortunes to my door.

"Georgie was a mere simple, confiding child when Miss Neville came," said she, "she 'as made 'er a forward girl. I 'ate preciosity"—she meant precocity; but that was a small slip for Mrs. Stanley to make.

I had calculated on exciting all this ill-will, and on my consequent dismissal, when I spoke to Mr. Stanley about my utter want of control over my pupils, so long as their hours of study were continually broken in upon; but I had done what I thought right, and did not repent. Mrs. Stanley thought if I was dismissed everything would fall into its old train. I was sitting alone in the drawing-room one evening, when husband and wife entered without observing my presence. I did not wish to play the part of a listener, but as they were speaking of me when they came in I felt an awkwardness in letting them know I had heard their conversation, and so kept quiet.

"George," said Mrs. Stanley, as she held open the door, "I intend to part with Miss Neville. She does not suit *my* idears of what a governess ought to be. I've 'ad a letter from Mrs. 'Ale this morning, and she mentions a young French lady, who is out of a situation, and would come for ten pounds a year less than Miss Neville, and it would be such a perdigious advantage to the children to learn French of a native Parishun."

"Very well, my dear. I thought Miss Neville

taught French remarkably well ; but do as you please," was his cool reply, as he passed out of the sashed window into the flower-garden. Mrs. Stanley followed him, and I made my escape, and ran up to my own room, where I locked myself in, and gave way to a violent burst of tears. I felt hurt and wounded. From Mrs. Stanley I expected no better, but I *did* think Mr. Stanley had appreciated my strenuous endeavours to do my duty to his children, and my heart throbbed with a sense of wrong and injustice.

Looking back to that time, I see that it was I that was unjust. What right had I to expect that Mr. Stanley would risk the chance of a disagreement with his wife for a governess ? It was far better that I should be sent away, than that any words should arise between husband and wife. Sisters in-law and mothers-in-law, and all people who are fond of lecturing others on the management of their families, should remember that a small evil is preferable to a great one. They do more harm than good, if they put an end to any folly by lessening the esteem and respect of husband and wife for each other, and creating disunion between them. No third party should interfere between man and wife.

I was not then married. I did not reflect upon all this. I saw, as people usually do, only what affected myself. "Always the same!" I cried : "do what I will, I please no one. I la-

boured—another will have the praise and the reward. I plant the flower—another enjoys its beauty, and inhales its rich fragrance.” Then I remembered that the glory lay not in the reward, but the work. To sow our seed, to till our fields—that was the labour appointed us; but who should gather the increase depended upon God. I crushed down my rebellious thoughts, and ordered myself to rejoice that I had been of some use to Georgiana; and then my tears flowed afresh, as I thought how hard it was to be obliged to leave her just when I had gained a beneficial influence over her mind and affections—just, in fact, when she was becoming very dear to me.

The following day Mrs. Stanley gave me notice to leave. She inquired blandly when it would suit me to go, “as I ‘ave ‘eard of a young Parishun, and of course, you know, Miss Neville, it would be such a advantage to the children to learn French from a native whose axioms are perfect; that it is better to lose no time in engaging ‘er.”

“Certainly, ma’am,” replied I, curtly. “I should be sorry to deprive you of such an inestimable advantage; I will write at once to my aunt’s, and let you know when they can receive me.”

I wrote, and stated the case to my aunt Diana. By return of post I received a very kind letter from her, in which she invited me to make Hilton my home until I heard of another situation.

On the receipt of this missive I proceeded to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Stanley reclined in state on one of the sofas, reading a fashionable novel; and forcing myself to look cool and calm, informed her that, as my aunts could receive me at once, I would leave the Rectory the following Monday—it was then Friday.

“Oh, Miss Neville, there’s no ‘urry!” she repeated; “no ‘urry, I don’t wish to be unkind; only as the French young lady is disengaged, I thought the sooner she came the better—on Monday, you say—I will write and tell ‘er.”

And she put aside her novel with alacrity, and opened her writing-desk.

“And I will pay you your salary now, Miss Neville, if you will come to my study,” said Mr. Stanley, looking up from his paper. He rose, and went out; and I followed, sick at heart, and pained that everybody should be so glad to get rid of me. I did not know Mr. Stanley.

He sat down, wrote a receipt, and handed it me to sign, together with fifty pounds.

“But I have only been here a little more than nine months, sir,” I said.

“I know it, but you have a right to a quarter’s notice; I am sorry you are going, you have improved the children amazingly. Had I been a richer man, I should have given you more—being

a poor one, I give you only your just due. I shall always be glad to hear of your welfare; and when you require a character write to me as well as to Mrs. Stanley—I am sure she will be happy to give you the recommendation you have merited by the pains you have taken with our children." He held out his hand, and gave mine a hearty shake. I left the room with a tearful eye and a lightened heart—my efforts had not been utterly unappreciated. My desk was in the school-room, and in it I kept the keys of my trunks. I went for them, intending to lock up the money Mr. Stanley had just given me. I found it in a perfect hubbub of excitement. Mrs. Stanley had just left it, after announcing my approaching departure, and the advent of the Parisian. Emma and Julia sat on the floor crying; Lucy and Beatrice looked pale, grave, and frightened at the prospect of a governess who could speak nothing but French, and whom their mamma told them they must always address in that language. Georgie was pacing up and down in a towering passion of anger, regret, and grief.

"It's too bad!" exclaimed she, as I entered; "first, they railed me for being idle, slovenly, and careless; and then they send away the person who has taught me to wish to improve. I know why it is—mamma thinks——"

I put my hand on her mouth.

"My dear Georgie; hush!—do not let your

mother have cause to say that I encouraged you to speak disrespectfully of her. Surely she has a right to change her governess if she likes it.” Georgie was silenced, but not appeased. The old cloudy expression returned to her face. Anger and sullenness sat throned upon her brow, as she took her place that day at the dinner-table.”

Her father looked at her.

“Louisa, my dear,” said he to his wife, “will you be kind enough to direct nurse to pack up Georgie’s books, music, and clothes? I think with you that no young lady so near her own age as Miss Neville or Mademoiselle Lenoir can manage her, and therefore I yesterday made arrangements with the Miss Carpenters for her entering their school. They have kindly consented to receive her at once, and I intend to drive her over there on Monday. The trunks can go by coach.”

Mrs. Stanley was thunderstruck. This was a termination to her *coup-d'état* that she had never foreseen. However, like a good general, she rallied her forces and covered her defeat as well as she could, simply saying, as if she had all along expected and known of it,

“Very well, my dear. I will tell Dawson to pack them.”

She afterwards confided to *me*, of all people, first, “Mr. Stanley did sometimes take the

strangest whims into 'is 'ead, when nothink would turn 'im, 'e is such a deciduous character," said she; "and this fancy of sending Georgie to school is one of 'is extraordinary allusions;" and next, her extreme regret that Georgie should lose this "invaluable opportunity of acquiring French from a Parishun. Miss Lenoir, Miss Neville, 'as lived in some of the most imminent situations, and I'm told," said she, smiling and shutting her eyes, and then slowly opening them, which was her way of expressing delight, "that 'er locations are peculiarly elegant. You know, my dear Miss Neville, it's so much better to embrue the stream at the fountain 'ead, before its dilution by passing through other 'ands."

I have little more to say of my stay at Weston Rectory. The three days passed away slowly and heavily to all parties. I believe we were none of us really sorry when Monday came.

Georgie would share my bed the last night, and neither rested herself nor let me rest, for she cried the whole night. I was annoyed, for I had two days' travelling before me, and wanted a good night's repose before starting; but how could I be angry with a violence of feeling which had its rise in affection? She made me promise again and again to write to her, kissed me, and bade me good night, a hundred times—and then,

when I was just falling asleep, woke me by sobbing. We both descended to the breakfast-table next morning with pale cheeks and red eyes. Neither of us could eat ; no one was inclined to talk. The meal passed in almost total silence. At nine o'clock the same coach that had brought me there stopped at the Rectory door to take me away. There was a kissing and leave-taking of the children, who all roared ; a close, convulsive embrace from Georgie ; a hearty shake of the hand, with "Good-bye—God bless you—write and say you get home safe," from Mr. Stanley, as he put me into the coach : the door was banged to, the coachman cracked his whip, the guard's horn sounded, and I found myself travelling back to the home I had quitted nine months before.

"I said she would come back, like a bad shilling!" observed my aunt Joan, triumphantly.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN I opened my eyes the morning after my return to Hilton, and found myself in the same white-curtained bed in which I had slept ever since I was nine years old, and, gazing vacantly round the room, recognized, one by one, all the familiar objects—the white-painted wash-stand and dressing-table, with its little looking-glass standing on it, the oak-painted chest-of-drawers, and the paper on the walls, so spotlessly clean, but ugly and inharmonious, like everything chosen by my aunt Joan—I felt as if I had just awakened from a dream.

I rubbed my eyes—there was that hideous pale yellow-papered wall. How well I knew the pattern—how often I had counted its stripes! Seven narrow lines of orange, each gradually diminishing in breadth on one side, six similar lines of dark blue on the other, forming together one broad stripe upon a lemon coloured ground. There, too, were the bare, well-scrubbed boards, the narrow slip of blue and brown bedside carpet, the two rush chairs

by the window—all neat, bare, cold, comfortless, after my luxuriously carpeted bedroom at Weston, with its fireplace, its soft rug in front, its small table, and well-cushioned arm-chair, which I had been accustomed to draw close to the fire and luxuriate in before going to bed.

Heavens! the thought of my having a fire in my bedroom, and sitting over it in a soft-cushioned arm-chair, would have driven my aunt Diana mad had she known it!

She belonged to a generation which disdained such effeminate luxuries, whose backs were unacquainted with sofas, and stiffened into iron at the very thought of arm-chairs!

Her own bedroom—large, wide, square—was not one whit better furnished than mine. From its size it looked all the more comfortless, with its bare white boards, and their four narrow strips of carpet before the drawers, in front of the dressing-table, and on two sides of the bed. And as to a fire! I never knew her have one, unless she was confined to her bed; and then the very sight of it—just a few red cinders in the narrow little grate, that threw out no heat—seemed to annoy her more than her illness. That could not be helped; but the fire, a mere whim of Mr. Jones', that was adding insult to injury.

“Truly our forbears did not care for comfort or ease,” I thought, as I mentally compared the

luxuriously furnished bedrooms of Weston Rectory with the desolate, dreary-looking chambers in my aunt's house.

I descended into the drawing-room. Nothing seemed changed. The very pin-cushion on the long table stood precisely where it did when I left Hilton. All looked clean, neat, stiff, and formal as ever. I could not believe I had been away nine months; yet I knew that if I had been absent nineteen years all would have looked precisely the same when I returned.

One after another my aunts came down. My aunt Diana was a picture, with her clear complexion and her beautiful yet severe features shaded by her own curling silver hair, and dressed in her old-fashioned, high-crowned mob-cap, with its pearl-white ribbons, and the purple silk gown. I had seen nothing like her since I went away. Both she and my aunt Theodosia dressed like old ladies, as they were: no false fronts, no artificial flowers, to make yellow skins and wrinkled cheeks look more faded; and yet their dress was not peculiar. It was a kind of mediæval structure, blending the taste of two far-distant epochs—the close-fitting mob-cap, with its falls of soft lace, belonged to the past; the silken gown, cut after the fashion of the day, appertained to the present. Both my aunts had been more than commonly beautiful in youth, and both were beautiful in age. The brilliant

colouring, the freshness, the gay smiling loveliness of early life had gone by—morning had long faded, noon passed, the shadows of evening descended. Old age seemed like the soft moonlight to veil all discrepancies, hide all asperities, tone down and neutralize whatever was too harsh or salient, and shed over all a pure and holy calm, that at once softened and endeared.

After breakfast I had to detail the reasons, so far as I knew or guessed them, which had led to my dismissal from Weston Rectory.

"It is only what I foresaw and expected," observed my aunt Joan, when I had concluded; "I knew she would stay nowhere."

My aunt Joan always took the very worst possible view of everything I thought, said, or did. I was so thoroughly aware of this that her opinion never affected me in the least. One wearies of trying to please a person who is predetermined never to be pleased.

"Well," said my aunt Theodosia, "I don't see, Lizzy, how you were to blame. Of course you couldn't improve the children if they weren't allowed to be under your control."

"And, of course," said my aunt Joan, in her usual satirical manner, "a young girl of seventeen was a better judge of the plan to be pursued than the mother of the family. I knew Elizabeth's self-sufficiency would lead to her dismissal, go where she would."

This speech was like one of the war weapons used by some savage race of men—but whether South Sea Islanders or American Indians I forget—and which consist of a leather thong with a heavy weight affixed to each end: one stone went flop against my poor little aunt The's pericranium, and plainly indicated what a weak-minded fool my clever aunt thought her for coinciding in my views of the subject; and the other was meant as a staggerer for me—just to floor me, and annihilate at once any pleasant little ideas I might have been nourishing about having done my duty; by shewing me that, in her opinion, which of course was that of all sensible people, I had simply acted like an ass.

"Mr. Stanley says in his letter, Joan, that the children improved greatly under Miss Neville's care, and that both he and Mrs. Stanley will be most happy to attest their perfect approbation of her conduct while their governess," observed my aunt Diana; "he gives, as a reason for parting with her, the fact that he thought her too young to manage a girl so near her own age as his eldest daughter. I know what girls are; I dare say this Miss Georgiana is a high-spirited, forward lassie: is she not, Elizabeth?"

"Rather so, aunt Diana."

"Well, well; it is done, and you are here again. We must look out for another situation,

where the eldest daughter is not near as old as yourself."

And we did look out, but the situation was not to be found. My aunt Joan daily harangued upon the folly and ingratitude of young women who never knew when they were well off, but must go tramping the world in search of misfortunes ; and recurred again and again to her favourite comparison of the bad shilling, till I had fully and completely felt the truth of Solomon's maxim, that "bread eaten in the house of another is bitter ;" and resolved inwardly to accept the very first situation that should offer, and to stay in it, comfortable or uncomfortable, if my employers would keep me.

I heard of one at last, through Melusina Beauchamp. She rode over from the abbey one morning on horseback.

"Lizzie," said she, as she sat down after the usual greetings, "I've heard of a situation, and I'm come, as I promised I would, to tell you of it ; but mind, Mrs. Neville," she added, turning to my aunt Diana, "I don't advise her to take it, for I wouldn't send any friend of mine to such a place."

"Where is it, Melusina ?" I cried.

"Lady Tanner wants an English under-governess. Madame St. Croix is the head governess at White Cross Priory. But, Lizzie, if you go you'll be wretched. Lady Tanner is con-

tinually changing her governesses—no one can stay there ; and I don't wonder—for though the Tanners are my own friends, and I like them very much, I would not be governess there upon any account."

" But if you like them, Melusina—and I have always heard the Miss Tanners well spoken of, as remarkably amiable girls—what objection can there be to Elizabeth's accepting the situation of governess at White Cross Priory ?" said my aunt Joan, pleased at the prospect of my going anywhere, where I was likely to be unhappy.

Melusina hesitated for a few minutes, then, looking up, said frankly,

" I don't like to speak ill of my intimate friends—and the Tanners are my intimate friends, and very kind to me, who am not their governess. They are very good people. Lady Tanner and her daughters are remarkably religious ; but for all that, as I said before, I know no family in which I should so little like to be governess. In the first place, their pride and *hauteur* are extreme. They will make Lizzie feel her subordinate position in every possible way, and yet leave her no ground of complaint. Lady Tanner is pride personified. I cannot understand how a person professing so much religion can be so proud. The girls are the same. Besides that, the four grown up daughters take it upon them to interfere with and direct the governesses of

their five younger sisters, and I think do more harm than good by such interference. Elizabeth will have so many people to please, she never can suit them all. First, Lady Tanner, who is very particular and strict; then the four eldest Miss Tanners; and afterwards that Madame St. Croix, of whom I know nothing. I wouldn't go—I'd rather be a housemaid!" cried Melusina, energetically.

"What is the remuneration offered?" I asked.

"Fifty pounds a year, and the *honour* of being governess to the Miss Tanners. Don't take it, Lizzie."

"I will, if I can get it," I answered.

"As to that, I can get it you to-morrow. A word from Mamma, Anne, or myself, will be enough. But I wish you wouldn't take it, Lizzie, for you will be unhappy; and when I know you are miserable, I shall blame myself for having been the means of placing you there."

"But I won't be miserable, dear Melusina. I do not expect to find much happiness as a governess, and the salary is a good one for a girl of my age. Besides, it will be a recommendation to me hereafter to have lived two or three years in Sir James Tanner's family."

"Two or three years! You won't stay above two or three months," said Melusina, discontentedly.

"Let her try the place, at all events, Melu-

sina," said my aunt Diana, decisively; "the girl has more common sense and judgment than I thought. It will be a recommendation to her hereafter to have been a governess in the family of Sir James Tanner, of White Cross Priory—and she must try and stay one year."

"If she can," said Melusina, doubtfully, as, rising, she gathered up the skirts of her riding-habit. "Well, Lizzie, since both Mrs. Neville and you yourself wish it, I'll make haste home, and write to Lady Tanner at once; and I heartily hope, for your sake, she may already have provided herself with a governess, for I'm sure you'll be wretched at White Cross." And Melusina swept out of the room with as doleful a look as if she were going to my funeral.

I followed her to the door, and saw her mount Saracen and ride off. She looked back, and shook her head at me as she cantered away, and I smiled gaily, and kissed my hand to her in return.

Like most Yorkshire ladies, she rode well, and never appeared to greater advantage than on horseback. They suited each other well—the graceful, high-born maiden, and the graceful Arab steed, I thought, as I stood watching her till she was lost in the distance. I plead guilty to a little—a very little weakness in favour of birth. We know how beauty and sagacity distinguish particular breeds of animals; and, so

far as external appearance goes, the highest types of face and form are certainly found among those whose ancestors have exercised no manual toil for centuries.

Of the mind I say nothing. Our greatest men have sprung from the people.

As I turned and went in, I contrasted my pale, colourless, laborious life with that of Melusina Beauchamp ; and, true Yorkshire lass as I was, sprung from the race of men of whom the proverb says, that “if you lay a halter on a Yorkshireman’s grave he’ll get up and steal a horse”—I envied her Saracen more than all.

Remember, I was not yet nineteen.

In a few days Lady Beauchamp came over to Hilton, accompanied by Lady Tanner, and I was presented in form, and duly inspected.

I cannot exactly say that she treated me like a horse, and examined my teeth to ascertain if my age was correctly stated ; but in other respects she evinced quite as little consideration for my feelings.

She was a tall, large woman, of colossal proportions. Too high-bred to say anything rude to me, it was wonderful how, despite her gentle tones and studied courtesy, she contrived to make me feel the immeasurable distance between herself—wife of Sir James Tanner, Baronet, of White Cross Priory—and me, poor Elizabeth Ne-

ville, applying for the situation of her governess.

The Neville blood mantled in my cheeks and temples, and careered tumultuously in my veins ; involuntarily I drew myself up, as I thought—“The Tanners were but serfs when the Beauchamp Nevilles gave laws to England”—but as I raised my eyes I caught a glimpse of my aunt Joan’s face, and saw the covert sneer with which she enjoyed my humiliation.

That glance decided me. I answered Lady Tanner’s questions coldly, respectfully, in the business-like style in which they were put.

I found favour in her sight.

The venerable appearance of my elder aunts had pleased her also ; “and,” as she afterwards observed to Lady Beauchamp, “it certainly was an advantage to have a governess who was of a respectable old family, and had no low connections, provided the young person knew her station, and did not give herself airs.”

The interview concluded by my being engaged conditionally—“if my character suited.” Lady Tanner arose, and sailed out of the room, having first taken leave of my aunts, with that mingling of respectful courtesy due to their age, and pretensions as Nevilles and near connexions of Lady Beauchamp, and the condescending superiority Lady Tanner, wife of Sir James Tanner, Baronet, must feel towards the relations of her future governess.

Me she honoured with a dignified bend, which I returned by a courtesy down to the ground, as became a governess. It was beautiful to see how clearly and accurately she defined the boundary lines between *her* situation and *ours*, the exquisite delicacy of gradation between her manner to Lady Beauchamp, to my three aunts, and to myself.

Oh! she was a great artist!

So, I afterwards found, were the young ladies her daughters.

Lady Beauchamp, I am sorry to say, disgraced herself. She was utterly unfit to be Lady Tanner's intimate friend. As she followed her out she looked back, put her finger to the side of her nose, and made a very significant gesture. The only excuse I can make for her is, that she considered us as relations; and that I have heard of a far greater person, remarkable for dignity in her public character, but who likes a laugh in private, teaching her little daughter the same gesture.

Lady Tanner, like all little great people, was always on parade, and therefore Lady Beauchamp laughed at her.

“It will do her *good!*” said my aunt Joan, as the carriage rolled away with the two ladies. “She will now learn the difference between governessing and a home like this!”

“You will be kept in order, there is not a

doubt, Lizzie ; but I do not know that Lady Tanner's haughtiness will be of much consequence to you. Go where you will, as a governess you must lose caste. Do your duty, and I hope, child, things will turn out well," said my aunt Diana.

A week's time saw me in a hack chaise, with my two trunks piled on the top, my carpet-bag and bonnet-box beside me on the seat, slowly wending my way towards the town of White Cross.

It was a dreary day, towards the latter end of autumn; the sky one uniform grey, a fall of small, fine rain or mist, that made no sound as it came down on the grass and leaves, but would speedily wet a traveller to the skin—the kind of rainy fog peculiar to the sea-coast, on which White Cross is situated. I pulled up the chaise-window, and asked if my luggage was well covered up.

"All right, miss."

Then I took up the sash, and wiped the moisture off the glass, and looked out. The day was dreary, the country was dreary. I have heard of a Londoner, who, on coming to White Cross, said, "I suppose this is where God Almighty left off making the world!" Just so it struck me: grim, dreary, desolate, and unfinished.

Judge: a long, long straight road; on either side of it swampy fields, divided from the high-

way, and from one another, by deep wide ditches, instead of fences, filled with black fetid water, covered with a foul green scum, where not overgrown by coarse rank flags and reed-grass. Windmills enough to have furnished Don Quixote with expeditions for a twelvemonth.

No trees—or, at most, one or two, shrunk, twisted, stunted, by the keen air. We pass the windmills, still the straight road continues. What a relief!—it winds, narrows—there is a high, uncut hedge!—there are trees! A stream of water runs across the road: what matter that we have to drive through it?—it is a change from the monotony of the way.

Close to the hedge is a beautiful old church, one might truly call it a miniature cathedral; I should like to stop and inspect it, but we go on.

We pass villages, nowise remarkable but for the charm of seeing once more high hedges, gay with changing leaves, and ruby and coral berries.

It is a relief to my mind to see anything natural and luxuriant, after those miles of straight road and slimy dykes.

Again the road widens, the country becomes more uniformly level; but there are trees, and hedges, and luxuriant grass still. We pass a beautiful ivy-mantled church. A few sheep browse on the fine turf in the churchyard. It looks a quiet, holy place: one would like to rest in it when God's time comes.

"Is that White Cross?"

"Naw; this be Elmfield. Yon's t' parson's hous. White Cross be moor nor three miles off."

We pass through Elmfield, and another village, both plain, neat, substantial, and unpicturesque. The road widens, the trees dwarf, the air feels more chill. I wrap my travelling-cloak more closely around me.

A long, wide lake; a young, not over-thriving plantation girdles the end nearest to me, which is also enclosed by a dense belt of reeds. The shores of the lake are flat and low; there is no beauty in the scene.

On the left-hand side of the road the fields rise a little higher than those close to the lake. At their foot stand two tumble-down thatched cottages, half-covered with ivy and honeysuckle, that is all there is of the picturesque in White Cross.

Through the little sea-cobble-paved town, where there is no life, no bustle; past some six or seven little shops, all of which sell precisely the same articles—and, consequently, none of which earn a living—namely, a few groceries, red herrings, and tallow-candles on the right-hand side, and a few hideous, dear prints, coarse calicoes, hanks of yarn, and faded, mildewed ribbons, which no one cares to buy, on the other.

Past the battered stone cross, standing on a square stone platform of six or seven steps, from

whence the town derives its name, and the old grey church.

Let us pause to look at that. Once—before Harry the Eighth despoiled the adjoining monastery—of which no vestiges remain, save some slight inequalities in the field behind, which mark its site—and took away its revenues, so that it fell into neglect and bad repair—before Cromwell's troopers stabled their horses in the sacred edifice, broke all the painted glass out of the fine window which fills up the whole end of the chancel, carved the shape of their shoes and the initials of their names upon the pillars and monuments, and otherwise defaced it—and before a still greater power, namely, a terrible gale, blew down the beautiful spire, which used to be a sea mark for miles along that coast—it must have been a majestic building ; as it is, with its square grey tower, built of unhewn sea-cobble, its long aisles and clere-stories, it is a fine old church still.

It stands on a little eminence, in a churchyard covered with mossy upright tombstones, which mark the resting-place of “ Ralph Foster, Gentleman, Butcher of this Parish,” and “ Joseph Simpson, Gentleman, Farmer of White Cross,” and other great men of the little town.

A dreary churchyard !—almost as dreary as that in Tottenham Court Road—where the fat, black earth refuses to grow anything but patches

of coarse grass and nettles—where the graves rise up black and hideous among the crooked tumble-down tombstones, instead of being covered with green sod; a churchyard whose aspect of utter neglect and desolation makes even the grave seem as wretched a retreat as the ruinous hovels that wall in one side of it, and which are tenanted by the pariahs of White Cross. Nothing holy, nothing solemn, nothing soothing about it. It suggests no feeling of repose. Covered at the end where the hovels stand, with shards of broken crockery, loose straws off the thatch, sticks and rubbish; with its heaped-up graves, where the black unctuous soil shows grimly from under patches of scanty grass, nettles, and thistles, it rather resembles “a potter’s field, purchased to bury strangers in,” than a Christian “God’s-acre.”

We turned up a narrow street, passed another stone cross—a memorial of the old Roman Catholic times—and drove through a long narrow lane, leaving the lake behind. The hedges were all bent and turned to the west, as if, like me, they shivered and shrank from the cold, searching sea-breeze. The few stunted trees along them resembled so many bent elbows, from the same cause. Thirty years before, the country for miles round White Cross was a bleak waste moor; now it was enclosed, but the wind careered dismally over its flat bleak level, sheltered by

no plantations, broken by no hills. On the right there was always a fresh breeze from the lake ; on the left, from their homes in ice-bound Russian deserts, came the cold sea-blasts.

Æolus kept his court there. How in winter the winds roared, and whistled, and shrieked !—eddied round the old gray church, and made the parson's chimney-pots rock as if they would fall ; tore the slates off his roof—caught hold of the young trees in his garden, and whirled them round and round in a circle, till they stood in a deep water-hole, quickly filled by the heavy driving rain ! How they howled in the chimneys of the old hall, and rushed along the streets and wynds, with a sobbing, mournful wail, and beat furiously as if for entrance against the crazy doors and lattices. Tradition said that they once unroofed a wretched hovel, and blew a newly-confined woman and her babe, bed and all, into the street. But that was before my time, when they only blew in the chancel window one September night ; broke to pieces three gallant vessels, whose crews all went down, and strewed the beach and the adjacent fields with chips of wood no bigger than my hand—all that was left of their huge timbers.

The hedges ceased. Our way lay through open fields, across which swept the howling

blast. The sea-roke wrapped the landscape in a dark, wet, grey veil; water dripped from the tips of the hedges and the spare, twisted, gnarled boughs of the bent elbow-like trees. Afar was heard the mournful booming of the sea. Not a thing was in sight but a miserable, half-starved, solitary jackass, who was trying to crop a scanty meal from the thistles in the open dykes that divided the fields. All looked so dark, so dreary, so desolate, I leant my head upon my hands and wept.

I wept long and violently, for my nature is impressible, and singularly influenced by scenery. I felt sure I should be miserable in this hideous, bare, gray swamp. The cold chilled my very blood; the damp seemed to eat into my bones. I felt oppressed, suffocated. I could not breathe that thick roky air.

In general, the monks have shown exquisite feeling for beauty in the selection of sites for their monasteries. It must have been as a penance that they fixed on White Cross, as an utter banishment from everything lovely, or loveable, even in nature.

The chaise stopped, and the driver got down to open a gate. Then I dried my eyes, for I concluded we were near the Priory. We drove through some plantations I could not see for the fog, and did not care to see; and finally stopped before a long pile of white buildings.

The door was opened ; a servant offered his arm for me to alight ; my luggage was lifted down from the chaise, and carried into the hall ; I settled with the driver and followed it—I was in White Cross Priory.

“I am Miss Neville,” I said.

The butler bowed with the supercilious air with which gentlemen of his class look upon us poor governesses, whose hard fate it is to be contemned by both master and man, mistress and maid. “Tommus will take you to the school-room, ma’am. Lady Tanner ‘as driven out this morning, and is not come ‘ome.”

The minor satellite obeyed, marshalling the way through long passages and various baize doors—needed, God knows, in that dreadful climate. I followed, a mist before my eyes, my heart beating fast. Seeing nothing and nobody, in my agitation, I stumbled into the room whose door Thomas flung open, with,

“Please, Miss Lucilla, here’s the new governess.”

A young lady came forward, and said in a sweet, well-toned voice,

“I am glad to see you, Miss Neville. Sit down by the fire, and get warm. You have had a disagreeable journey, I fear, this damp, foggy day.”

Thomas placed a chair, and I sat down. When my eyes had become accustomed to the

glare of light, which dazzled me after coming out of the fog, I saw that Miss Lucilla was a tall, elegant girl of about two-and-twenty, with small delicate features, broad black arched eyebrows, golden-coloured hair, and an exquisite complexion. Her manners were as polite and as freezing as Lady Tanner's; smooth as an icicle, and as cold. She introduced me to her younger sisters, and to Madame St. Croix, my coadjutrix, whom she desired to ring for tea, as that would warm and refresh me better than anything else, and left the room.

Shortly afterwards, her maid, Mdlle. Laure, came in, and said, "Miss Lucilla thought I should like to see my room, and take off my things, while tea was preparing;" and again, but in an opposite direction, I traversed long passages and corridors. When I reached my own apartment the soubrette offered to assist me in undressing; I declined her services with thanks. I felt tired, jaded, dispirited, and I was glad to be alone.

Wearily, mechanically, I took off my various wraps: they were quite damp, though I had travelled with the chaise window up—so penetrating was the sea-roke—and I hung them on chairs to dry. I washed my hands and face, and then looked at myself in the glass; my face was pale, my hair out of curl from the fog. I braided it neatly, took a fresh untumbled dress

from my trunk, together with a clean collar, and put them on.

I was aware of the importance of first impressions. When my toilette was complete, I looked at myself again. There was no *beauté du diable*, nothing attractive about me that night at least. I looked the humble, dispirited, subdued governess completely.

Perhaps it was as well.

This important affair over, I sat down by the fire to think—perhaps I should rather say to feel. The long dreary drive through so many miles of bleak, barren, uninteresting scenery—the chilliness of the thick dense fog, that veiled everything towards the close of my journey—seemed to me typical of the future. I felt lost in that wide wilderness of a house, through which I dared not attempt to find my way again to the school-room. I felt lost among all these strangers, not one of whom, I was certain, would ever be less of a stranger to me than now. I felt that in that house I should—as Melusina had forewarned me—be inevitably miserable. Yet I would not let the sorrow at my heart have way. I told myself that life was but a journey; a long up-hill journey to most. Resolutely, I repelled every cowardly voice which whispered to my inner soul, “If you do not like the place, you need not stay here.” I determined that I *would* stay. Like it, or dis-

like it, I would remain two or three years, if I could succeed in giving satisfaction to my employers. My aunt Joan should not taunt me with being like a bad shilling again. Meanwhile, I resolved to force myself to assume a cheerfulness I did not feel, and to acknowledge my depression to no one.

I was not left long to myself. The door opened, and Lady Tanner sailed in, followed by two daughters, whom she introduced to me as Miss Tanner and Miss Matilda Tanner.

They each levelled an eye-glass at the proud, shy, sensitive governess ; and surveyed me with grave deliberation, made some common-place inquiries concerning my journey—and, with their lady mother, left the room.

I remained meditating on great people and little people, and wondering how the Tanners would feel when they got to heaven ; where, according to the Bible, there must be a great deal of low society, since Lazarus lies in Abraham's bosom ; and thinking how strange it was that people, professing to make it the endeavour of their lives to imitate Christ and his Apostles, should yet value themselves so much on possessing a little more dross than others.

Between myself and the Tanners there was this one difference—wealth ; and yet they spoke to me, and looked at me, as if I was scarcely of the same species. By and bye I heard a tap at

the door ; I rose and opened it. A fair-haired little girl came in, and said,

“Please, Miss Neville, Madame St. Croix desired me to fetch you to tea in the school-room.”

The evening wore away in dulness and dreariness. The young ladies prepared their tasks for the following day, and practised. Between Madame St. Croix and myself the conversation consisted of a few unconnected sentences, referring chiefly to the weather.

At last the clock on the chimney-piece chimed the half-hour.

“Mesdemoiselles remettez tout cela, à sa place, il est huit heures et demi. Mademoiselle Neville va lire les prières du soir.”

They obeyed. One among them sought the book of prayers, opened it, and brought it to me. We knelt down ; and with as composed and steady a voice as I could command I read the short service.

When we all arose the young ladies came and stood a few minutes round the fire. One of them observed, she must rise half an hour earlier than usual the next morning, as she had not mastered her Italian lesson ; another hoped it would be fine, that I might see the gardens. They talked like little women ; there was nothing fresh, natural, or child-like about any of them. They were all coined in the same mint,

and stamped with the same die, as Lady Tanner and her elder daughters. I do not suppose they ever could have been naughty—it would have been unbecoming the Miss Tanners.

The clock struck nine. They each of them took up their bed candlesticks, lit the candles, touched Madame St. Croix's hand and mine, uttered, “*Bon soir, Madame—bon soir, Mademoiselle Neville,*” turned at the door, made a formal reverence, and departed to bed.

“*Dieu merci ! Voilà qui est fini pour aujourd’hui !*” said Madame, shrugging her shoulders in that indescribable manner which implies so much, and which none but foreigners can achieve. I made no reply.

“*Eh, bien ! Mademoiselle Neville, vous ne dites mot ? Comment trouver vous ce Vite-cross Priory ?*”

“*Mais, madame, je ne viens que d’arriver, je ne puis pas en juger.*”

“*Aussi bien que si vous y aviez démeurée cent ans. C'est toujours le même. Mon Dieu ! quel triste pays que l'Angleterre ; et que vous êtes tristes, vous autres Anglaises !*”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE apartments of the younger children and their teachers were, I found, in one wing of the house, and entirely separated from those occupied by the other members of the family, and by their guests.

That vast pile of buildings, called White Cross Priory, contained as it were several kingdoms, the boundaries of which were most strictly defined, and which no one ventured to pass without proper warrant for so doing. Guests came and went, and Madame St. Croix, myself, and our pupils never saw their faces, or heard their names. We knew as little what went on in the other three parts of the house, as if they had been the other three quarters of the world, and separated from us by seas and oceans.

Our days moved on with the regularity and monotony of clock-work. There was nothing to break the sameness of routine, or to invigorate the spirits when harassed and jaded by teaching. The strain upon the nerves was never relaxed;

the tension of the mind never ceased—it was a mental tread-mill.

Argus eyes watched that the prescribed series of lessons were regularly gone through—there was no possibility of rendering them more interesting to the pupil, and less wearisome to the teacher, by introducing the slightest variation. Everything was done by rule, and every hour of the day was filled up. One or other of the Miss Tanners generally sat with us; one of them, or their lady mother, invariably examined and criticised the day's performances. It was a weary life!

Perhaps I ought not to have complained; perhaps I ought to have been thankful for a shelter from the weather, for food, for a moderate salary, and no positive ill-treatment; and yet such is my faultiness of disposition that I was not.

I hated my monotonous, mechanical life—my dreary, isolated existence. My human heart cried out for something to love.

What would I not have given for some variety, for Georgiana Stanley's sullenest look; for Julia and Emma's little funny perverse ways; for anything that was not stereotyped and conventional! Anything free, lively, or natural; any one single being to whom I could attach myself. My pupils were gentle, obedient, pains-taking; but I could not presume to love them. They were civil to

me as they were to their maid ; but they never, for an instant, forgot the difference between Sir James Tanner's daughters and their *hired* governess.

We prayed a great deal at White Cross Priory. First of all, we assembled in the school-room, at six o'clock in summer, half-past seven in winter—never later—when we had prayers. Then the young ladies looked over their lessons, one of the number sitting down to practise the harp or piano. At eight breakfast was served. After that meal was over, we read the psalms and lessons for the day. At half-past nine Sir James Tanner read prayers to his family, when we were expected to attend.

He was a tall, handsome man, and looked very dignified and imposing as he stood at the head of his study-table, and cast a majestic glance on each of us as we filed in one after the other, and took our places, while Lady Tanner and her grown-up daughters rustled into the room in their elegant morning dresses, looking as if they thought the earth honoured by their tread ; but calling up an expression of humility into their faces, which came and went with their bibles.

We knelt, and with a grave, sonorous voice, and with great unction of manner, Sir James Tanner acknowledged that “we were all mi-

serable sinners" in God's sight, prayed that we "might have humble, contrite hearts," and lastly, "that we might not set our affections on earthly things, but be kept from all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world; from false pride and vain glory; and so use things temporal that we might inherit life eternal."

After prayers we arose, the younger Miss Tanners saluted their parents and elder sisters, and kind and loving greetings passed between them—for among themselves they were a most affectionate family; but Madame St. Croix and I stood by as lacqueys waiting at a richly-spread table; we might hunger and thirst—not a crumb would fall to our share.

The morning after my arrival at White Cross I had been formally presented to the master of the house, who, on that occasion, surveyed me with much the same air with which Nelson, on the top of his pillar, looks down on the lamp-posts in Trafalgar Square; bent two of the vertebræ of his neck, and said, in a tone of superiority, "Good morning, Miss Neville."

More words than those four he never addressed either to Madame St. Croix or myself during the three years that I remained at White Cross. It was, in fact, a condescension for him to say so much even to governesses. Usually he simply noticed our presence by a stately bend, which we returned by a deep curtsey, as we rose from

our knees, and turned to retire to our part of the house.

When only the family party or very dear friends were staying at the Priory, there was usually some religious reading in the drawing-room after breakfast was over, and the gentlemen had dispersed to amuse themselves on the magistrates' bench, in hunting, shooting, fishing, planting, and other recreations appertaining to country gentlemen of large estate; and these readings the governesses and younger children had "the privilege," as they called it, of attending. Now and then—on the rare holidays permitted, and when it was quite certain no gentleman would return to luncheon—Lady Tanner would graciously permit us to remain until that meal was announced, when we retired to our dinner in the school-room.

The conversation on such occasions was studiously "of an improving nature, such as would benefit both teachers and children," as Miss Agatha, who was two years younger than myself, one day condescendingly remarked to me. Nevertheless, I was not improved by it, as I decidedly ought to have been.

Of course, neither Madame St. Croix nor myself presumed to converse with the family. We meekly answered any question that might be addressed to us; further than that we took no part, but we listened. How strange it seemed

to hear the remarks that followed the reading, and sprung from it—to hear self-denial, brotherly love, and humility so beautifully inculcated, and to contrast the precepts with the practice, the humble words with the lofty spirit. The whole Tanner family professed to set no value “on the riches which moth and rust could corrupt”—to esteem a pure and upright heart more worthy than princely rank—to look upon themselves as wayfarers on a journey, to whom it was of little consequence “in what sort of apparel they were clad, or what sort of entertainment they met on the way,” provided they arrived safely at the Eternal City; and yet they treated Madame St. Croix and myself—both gentlewomen by birth, and as well educated as themselves, or we could not have held the positions we did—as beings utterly unfit to associate with them, simply because we used the talents God had given us to earn our own bread, instead of depending upon rich relations. Even Madame St. Croix’s filial devotion in working to maintain a widowed mother, could not redeem her in their eyes—praiseworthy, as they often called it—from the deep degradation of being a governess; while, had anyone left her a large fortune, she would have become their equal immediately.

Involuntarily, as such thoughts passed through my mind, my glance would rest on all the luxu-

riant elegance of that magnificent room—on marble consoles supported by golden feet, and covered with precious articles of *virtu*—on costly mirrors in richly-ornamented frames, and silken-covered chairs and couches. The soft carpet on which I pressed my foot yielded to the tread, like a bed of moss; the very air came into the room loaded with fragrance from the flowers of a large conservatory, into which it opened.

I say, I gazed on all these evidences of wealth, not wrong in themselves, had they been valued as what they were—mere external advantages, conferring no true superiority—I mused on their owner's pride of caste and station, and I asked myself this question :

If Jesus, the carpenter's son, came once more upon earth, would these great people notice so low a person ?

I trow not.

CHAPTER IX.

ANNE and Melusina Beauchamp were frequent visitors at White Cross.

Of course I never knew what guests were expected, or who came and went; and the first intimation I generally had of their advent was by their “making a raid,” as Melusina phrased it, into that domain of dulness, the school-room, and astonishing the minds of the younger Miss Tanners by their cordial and affectionate manner to a governess.

They seldom made such an incursion above once during their visit, and they must have been great favourites with Lady Tanner to be allowed in any way to infringe on the strict discipline of the house. Their blithe, bonny faces were “a sight for sair een;” they brought, as it were, a waft of the fresh, outer air of another merrier world than mine into the dull room; it was pleasant and inspiriting only to have their joyous, natural laugh. It awakened my heart—which was petrifying under the cold water of Tanner

reserve continually dropping on it, as effectually as any bird's-nest or wig placed under the dropping well at Knaresborough—once more to life and warmth, to receive those cordial shakes of the hand, to feel myself treated as an equal and a gentlewoman, if but for a few moments.

Their visits resembled brief glimpses of sunshine darting into a gloomy prison, casting a transient glow and warmth on the bare walls and stone floors ; and making it feel more chilly, damp, and tomb-like when withdrawn.

I have not described Anne and Melusina—a better hand than mine should have painted their portraits. Anne was the most graceful woman I ever saw. There was something sweet, natural, and tender in her look and manners, that won all hearts. I question whether she could have done or said a rude or unkind thing. I believe the great secret of her fascination lay in this constant consideration for the feelings of others, even more than in her rare beauty. Her way of speaking to a governess, a servant, or an old beggar woman, was as courteous and genial as that in which she addressed a duchess. There was no pride, no assumption about her, but a gentle, gracious dignity, which formed a far more effectual barrier against familiarity or impertinence than all the supercilious, icy politeness of the Tanners.

Her style of beauty harmonized with the

character of the lovely soul it enshrined. Her tall, flexible figure had the elegance and suppleness of the willow—every movement was natural and full of grace. She looked elegant even when—as I have often seen her do in a playful humour—she laid her hands on a high rail fence, and vaulted over it. Her head was small, well-formed, and beautifully set on the slender neck and well-shaped shoulders ; her forehead low, broad, and rather square ; her long luxuriant tresses drooped on either side her face, half-way down to the slender waist, and were loosely knotted up in a statuesque way behind. Her eyebrows were nearly straight, and remarkably flexible, giving play and expression to the other features ; her eyes were long-cut, soft, and sleepy, their colour a blue grey ; her mouth was nearly straight, but well formed, and her smile was one of the pleasantest I ever saw ; her complexion fair and delicate, but healthy ; and whatever dress she wore seemed to be precisely that which was best adapted to set off her sweet face and figure. Her voice, low and silvery sweet, had a peculiar affectionate earnestness in its tone—*un ton caressant*, the French call it ; we have no term for this rare charm. If you had heard it in the dark, you would have expected, when light revealed the countenance of the speaker, to see such a woman as Anne Beauchamp.

How poor a portrait of her who was the acknowledged belle of the whole county!

Melusina was handsome, not beautiful. Her figure was more ample and showy than Anne's, her whole demeanour challenged more observation. There was a dash of originality about her, that was infinitely charming—a strange mixture of exquisite kindness of heart, with a rollicking, "I don't care" sort of character, that bewitched one in spite of oneself. She often did and said strange, out-of-the-way things, that in other women would have seemed vulgar; but a certain air of lofty high breeding prevented her from ever being so. Her features were not so regular as Anne's; she had not the same peculiarly graceful turn of the head and neck; her forehead was higher and rounder; her luxuriant hair a lighter brown; her large beautiful eyes a very light hazel—"Les yeux vairs, vifs, et pourtant si doux" of Clotilde de Surville. She was what the men called her—"a splendid creature."

Of these two sisters, both of whom showed me equal kindness, I never could settle with myself which I liked and loved the most.

Neither Anne nor Melusina patronized missionary baskets, and worked very unwillingly for the bazaars which the Tanners set agoing in aid of funds for building churches or schools. They did not like, any more than King David,

"to give to the Lord of that which had cost them nothing," or to lessen the few modes in which impoverished gentlewomen and crippled invalids could maintain themselves.

We talk of the progress of society. In some things our forefathers were better than we are—there was in their days less cant and more religion; less profession of fine feelings, and more real sympathy for those who were reduced to poverty.

We like to give sixpence, and have the credit of giving a pound; so we open bazaars and keep a charity-shop. The greater part of our goods we beg from our neighbours. What we make ourselves are manufactured of remnants of our silk dresses and bonnet ribbons, and pieces from our milliner's and silk mercer's, and cost little beyond our labour, which is of no importance to those who have not to earn their living. We sell articles thus fabricated at an enormous price, and, after refunding to ourselves the expenses and costs, give the *profit* of our charity-shop to God.

I doubt He will prefer the widow's mite. That involved self-denial.

Our ancestors were no Pharisees; they did not pretend to any particular righteousness. When they wanted to collect a sum of money for a charitable purpose they gave a ball, which employed vast numbers of people, brought young

persons together, realized a considerable sum of money for whatever institution it was given in aid of, and injured no one ; and they did not assume any merit to themselves for dancing at it, or profess that superior sanctity to which bazaar-giving ladies lay claim.

Formerly, the making fancy articles for Repositories was a sure support to feeble, delicate women, unable to go out as governesses. Now they starve, or do worse ; but surely God will require an account of those who take not of their own wealth to sacrifice to Him, but take away occupations by which the impoverished gentlewoman, brought up to no trade, can earn bread—and are thus generous at the cost of her starvation, misery, and death.

I speak what I know ; and it is the duty of every bazaar-giving lady to read the eloquent appeal sent to Lady Morgan by one of those sufferers, after she had been patroness of a bazaar, and published by her ladyship in her “Book of the Boudoir.”

Melusina and Anne saw no generosity in what involved no personal sacrifice ; but I have known them go to a ball in dresses they had often worn, because they had given some poor distressed creature the money set aside to buy new ones. They never thought this any merit—they did it as a thing of course. The poor wretch was fa-

mishing, and they were not rich enough to buy the dress after relieving the misery. When they voluntarily worked for charity, it was to make garments and baby linen for the poor. They talked little about religion, but I have seen Melusina weeping with a woman who had just lost her infant; and Anne return with tearful eyes from the bed of a dying girl, to whom she had been reading the bible.

There was not the least hypocrisy in the religion of the Tanners. It was deeply felt; it sustained them in sorrow and adversity, and smoothed the bed of suffering. When Lady D'Arcy, the beautiful and beloved elder daughter, whose brilliant marriage had given them all such joy, died in childbed, the bereaved family bowed their heads, and cried, "God's will be done: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

When Amelia was seized with a complaint in the knee, for which amputation became necessary, neither she nor her parents murmured that thus, in her youth and beauty, she was cut off from all enjoyment of both.

It was beautiful and touching to see their resignation to God's will. It was beautiful to witness the love and unity that reigned among them, from the eldest to the youngest. In the three years I passed at White Cross I never heard a harsh word from one sister to the other

—I never saw an angry look. The greatest possible harmony prevailed between the parents and their children; the voice of discord and contention was unheard.

I have since noticed this to be a common characteristic of rich and noble families, where there are ample means, numerous servants to attend to every want or caprice, and none of the continual strains upon the temper, and calls for sacrifice of personal ease and comfort to others, that arise where the means are limited, and the domestic attendants necessarily few. Yet it is pleasant to see family union, whatever be the cause.

They were anxious to do good, and generous —to those who held their own views. But theirs was not the true Catholic generosity which embraces all mankind in its liberality. It was restricted to those who were what they termed “professing Christians.” They went much about among the poor, and gave to their distresses with a liberal hand, and conversed far more affably with them than with those who were but a little below themselves. There was no danger that George Buchan the gamekeeper, Jane Binns the laundress, or John the footman, should presume to claim equality with them. The sphere in which such persons moved was separated by boundless space from the orbit in which Sir

James Tanner's family revolved. But to the small squires of the neighbourhood, and clergymen's families—all as well educated and as polished as themselves—and many of them descended from ancestors who ranked as feudal nobles when Tanners were serfs—to these, and to their tutors and governesses; the distant *hauteur* they affected was, to my thinking, and that of many others, unchristian.

It is strange, but it is a fact, that in no families are tutors and governesses so haughtily treated as in those who profess to be very religious. No set of people have less sympathy for others than those who in these days profess to be followers of the meek and compassionate Jesus, whose apostles taught that we should “rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”

Sir James and Lady Tanner sometimes patronized the clergyman of White Cross so far as occasionally to invite him and his family to dinner. But they did not approve of him; for, though a kindly-disposed man, ever ready to contribute his mite towards relieving distress, he was not as active and zealous in carrying out the new-fangled modes of the day, regarding weekly and Sunday schools, as they fancied he ought to be.

Dr. Jenkins thought that if the working-

classes were *over-educated* they would become discontented, and think themselves above performing the duties of the station in life in which they were born, without having acquired the knowledge or means which would raise them to a higher one. Thirty years' experience has proved his fears were well-grounded ; for now the rich are commencing a retrograde movement, and establishing schools in which the children of the poor may be taught what, before the educational mania began, they learnt of their mothers at home : to scrub tables and floors, light a fire, wash and iron their own clothes, and cook, as well as to work neatly—which few of them can do now, though they can work crochet, and embroider under-sleeves for Sunday wear.

Therefore, the Jenkins family were no favourites with the Tanners, whose souls were devoted to schools, missionary meetings, clothing clubs, and bazaars ; to anything, in short, which enabled them to display their piety and goodness to the world.

I was engaged, one day, in the school-room, hearing Miss Clarissa Tanner read the history of England, while my fingers were at the same time employed in working a footstool for one of the abominable bazaars, a piece of work I had undertaken very unwillingly, as it compelled me to put out a new gown to make, which I had intended

to make myself, and for which I had to pay twelve-and-sixpence, when Miss Agatha entered the apartment.

"Good morning, Madame St. Croix; good morning, Miss Neville. I am glad to see you all so industrious. And how very kind in you both to be working for our bazaar—so little time as you have!"

"Ah, oui! Mademoiselle Agatha, nous avons, en effet, tres peu de temps. Nous ne pouvons vous donner que des moments perdus."

"We are obliged to you both, madame. You are labouring in a good cause. These schools which we wish to establish will, I hope, be a great benefit to the poor children."

There was no help for it. A request from my employers was equivalent to a command. So I put my dresses out to be made. Doubtless, if they thought about it at all, they thought that out of a salary of fifty pounds a year I could afford to spend a sovereign or two in dress-making. So, perhaps, does the reader.

Consider that in such a house I had always to appear nicely dressed; that I was often obliged to buy new clothes because I had not time to repair what, if repaired, would have lasted some months longer; that a governess has no immunity from the visitations of sickness and disease; and that out of the thirty years during which

it is possible she may be able to work, if she has good health, and is so fortunate as never to be long out of a situation, she has to save what will maintain her in her old age.

I was very anxious to spend nothing I could avoid spending.

"You certainly do work beautifully, Miss Neville," said Miss Agatha, bending over me, and examining my work through her glass. "I am so much obliged to you for that pretty stool; and to Madame St. Croix, too, for her beautiful collar. How exquisitely you French ladies embroider, madame; the Miss Beauchamps work beautifully, but they do not equal you. However, I must now go back to my own occupation; I merely came, by mamma's desire, to say that she will be happy to see you both in the drawing-room this evening; my sisters will come with you of course. We expect Dr. Jenkins, his wife and daughter, to dinner—mamma would like to find you in the drawing-room when we come out of the dining-room, Madame St. Croix."

"Miladi me fait trop d'honneur. Mademoiselle Neville et moi, nous serons charmées de passer la soirée au salon," said Madame St. Croix, with a pleased smile. I answered, "I should be very happy." And Miss Agatha, having acquitted herself of her mission, withdrew.

The school-room clock gave notice that it wanted a quarter to one o'clock. Lesson-books and exercises were hastily put aside, and our five pupils went upstairs to make themselves "tidy" before dinner.

"Grand merci de la politesse de miladi," said Madame St. Croix, shrugging her shoulders; "la soirée sera amusante, avec le fier Sir Shames, qui n'a jamais rien à dire, et le vieux clergé-man et sa femme et sa fille, qui ne diront que des fadeurs. Quand il y a du monde qui nous amuseroient, jamais on ne nous invitent."

"Je m'en soucie peu d'y aller," I replied. "J'aimerais mieux de rester dans la classe. Je ne me plais guère parmis les personnes qui me dédaignent, mais il faut y aller."

"Je crois bien," said Madame St. Croix, with a derisive smile. "Ma chère, c'est une commande. Nous prendrons notre ouvrage, et nous travaillerons comme si c'étoit notre gagne-pain. Malheureusement l'on ne nous paye pas."

A little after seven Madame St. Croix, the younger Miss Tanners, and myself, entered the drawing-room. How little we can judge of people's actual condition by outward appearances! Had any one seen Madame St. Croix and myself, both nicely dressed, and sitting engaged in elegant fancy work, in that splendid drawing-room, with its six windows all thrown open, letting in the

delicious perfume from the garden, now in the height of summer beauty, and gorgeous with gay-coloured annuals, and rare and costly exotics, they would hardly have suspected us to be what we were—two poor governesses, there on sufferance.

It was useless to indulge in such reflections, so I planted myself at the window, resolved for once to revel in the beauty of the scene. I had a passion for flowers, amounting almost to mania: I think I could have been happy even at White Cross—at least in the summer season—if I could have wandered at will in that beautiful garden, renowned throughout the whole county. But that would have been an infringement upon etiquette, and I now looked forward to spending a part of this evening in it as a positive enjoyment.

Lady Tanner was proud of her garden, and would, I knew, take us all over it.

The slightest inequality of ground had been carefully taken advantage of, and artificially increased, so as to simulate a natural undulation of country—carefully fenced in from the east winds by a dense plantation of Scotch firs, hidden by trees of gayer aspect, judiciously mingled with evergreens, so planted as to appear to open here and there into distant woodland glades—it was the only really picturesque flower-garden I ever saw.

The fine turf, mown every third day, was soft and green as velvet. Here and there, among the innumerable gay flower-beds, a few magnificent old oaks—planted, doubtless, by the monks in far back days, when White Cross was, as old records prove, ten miles from the sea, instead of within half a mile of it—cast their broad and pleasant shade.

The rising ground I spoke of sloped in smooth verdure down to the banks of what appeared to be a clear stream, resplendent with beautiful water-lilies, but was, in fact, an artificial dyke. In winter, choked up with dead weeds and slimy, it was unsightly enough; but now, with the evening sun shining on it—reflecting the golden and crimson clouds—and the trellis walk, covered with every variety of roses, and gaudy-hued creepers that ran along one side—it was exquisitely beautiful! The songs of the missel thrushes in the copses, the brilliant-coloured flowers and their almost intoxicating sweetness, the soft emerald turf, the glassy water, and the glorious sky above, made the whole scene like Fairy-land.

The ladies came in from the dining-room, and I was presented to Mrs. and Miss Jenkins.

The first was a good sort of every-day old lady, who thought that what interested her must interest everybody else. She talked of her boys and her husband, and her domestic affairs, all

the evening. She told Lady Tanner, in strict confidence, how Jem had caught cold by leaving off his flannel waistcoat when he went back to chambers in London—but young men would always be young men, and careless; and how Tom had come in third in the boat-race at Cambridge; and repeated nearly every word of a letter she had received from Ben, who was in Australia; and finally, how she had lost four dozen of beautiful gooseberry-wine, which she had just made, from inadvertence in desiring the maid to place them upright in the cellar, instead of laying them horizontally—the consequence of which was that the wine effervesced, and broke all the bottles; and to all Lady Tanner listened with high-bred attention. She had made up her mind to be bored for that day.

Harriet Jenkins devoted herself to me. She entwined her arm lovingly in mine, and thus we paraded up and down the garden together.

She was neither handsome nor plain. She had good dark eyes and hair, middling features, and a neat figure. She was dressed in the very height of the reigning mode, and among a certain set would have been deemed fashionable; here she looked the very reverse.

She was one of those young ladies who consider marriage a woman's profession; but she had not got on in hers, for on the wrong side of thirty she was single still.

She regretted there were no gentlemen dining at the Priory that day, and the general dearth of beaux in that neighbourhood ; and inquired if any of the Miss Tanners were engaged ?

I replied I did not know, and the conversation languished. Then she favoured me with a long account of some visits she had paid two years before in the neighbourhood of London, where there were plenty of beaux, and of the attention she had then received ; and this lasted until we were summoned in to tea.

After tea we took up our work, and Harriet, who had taken a seat next me, became eloquent on that theme. She was knitting a pair of mitts in some new and intricate stitch. I admired them, and she very good-naturedly offered to teach it me. A knowledge of all kinds of fancy-work is essential to a governess, and I gratefully accepted her offer ; but there was not time, for just as I was repeating after her—" cast off two and knit one," Mrs. Jenkins said it was half-past ten, and they must go home ; so we shook hands and parted, and she promised to write the receipt down and send it to me.

It came a day or two afterwards, accompanied by a kind note, in which she said that, as the stitch was a difficult one, she thought I had better come over to the Rectory the following Saturday and drink tea with her, and I could then perfect myself in it.

I asked Lady Tanner's permission to accept the invitation, and she gave a ready consent.

I was half angry with myself for the anxiety with which I looked forward to this visit, the first amusement I had had for nearly a year and a half. I was ashamed when I caught myself looking at the sky, and hoping it would be fine; for I did not particularly admire any of the Jenkins family: it was only that I seized with avidity anything which promised a change—any relief from the intolerable monotony of my life.

I paid my visit, and that one led to other visits; and I received so much kindness from Mrs. and Miss Jenkins, that in spite of our having no mutual point of agreement in character or tastes, I contracted a sort of affection for them.

It must not be supposed I went there often—perhaps altogether six or seven times in a year; but that was much to the poor recluse governess, without amusement, and far from her former friends.

If the neighbourhood of White Cross had been beautiful, I might have found in its scenery a compensation for my dull and wearisome life; but an uglier place I never beheld. It had not even the common charm of most country-places—field-flowers. There were scarcely any cowslips, no primroses, blue bells, or wood an-

mones, no honeysuckles, no clematis, no purple orchis; no crimson foxgloves, or mulleins, on the hedge-banks of those long straight lanes: nothing to charm the eye or win the heart. Home affection alone could have rendered the spot endurable to one of my character and pursuits—one to whom the beauties of nature were almost a necessary of existence—who, even as a child, in that dreary town house, had pined for the beautiful—but I had not that.

Its ugliness, its dreariness, its desolation, added to the wearing, exhausting nature of my daily, never-ceasing occupation of teaching, preyed upon my spirits and affected my health—the more because the sea-air did not suit my constitution. I struggled as much as I could against the depressing effects of all these combined, and would not give way and throw up my situation.

Beyond the plantations and the pleasure-grounds lay the wide open fields I have before described—flat, uninteresting, and dreary, for about half a mile; then they suddenly, as it were, broke off—and considerably below their surface rolled the sea.

The only beach was about a quarter of a mile long. On either side of it stretched the unprotected fields, from which the sea annually washed away four or five yards every winter. At low water you could ramble for miles upon the sands;

but woe to you if you continued walking till the tide came in ; for only here and there were those earthen banks, denominated cliffs by courtesy, passable, and in winter they were one mass of soft clay.

I once saw a horse ; frightened by the roar of the sea, dash madly up them and sink to his fore-shoulder. His rider threw himself off backwards ; but it was terrible to see the poor beast's agony—and yet, with that strange fascination which the horrible exerts over us, I felt spell-bound to the spot, and could not turn away my eyes until I saw the end.

His head was thrown back ; his dilated eyeballs seemed ready to start from their sockets, his nostrils quivered, every muscle in his neck and chest stood out distinct and clear, like knotted cords, with the agony of his fear. He was quiet enough at first ; and I stood and watched his master and two men dig him out.

When they had cleared him half-way to the fetlock, his struggles became so violent that they were forced to desist and leave him to himself. He gave two terrible plunges, awful to witness ; with the third he wrenched himself free, and galloped furiously down to the sea.

There his master caught him, and coaxed him into the shallow water. It took the other two men near an hour to scrape the mud off him with their knives, and wash him partly clean.

When it was all over, as no harm happened to man or horse, I was glad once to have seen such a sight. It enabled me to understand the truthfulness and beauty of what I had before thought unnatural: the horse in the celebrated fresco of Curtius taking the leap.

There are shifting quicksands along the whole line of this coast, and every now and then terrible accidents happen. About thirty years ago a lady was walking on the sands, accompanied by her only son and a pet dog. In some of its gambols the little creature ran into one of these treacherous spots. The young man, seeing his favourite struggling and sinking, rushed to save it, and both were swallowed up before the mother's eyes.

At certain periods, too, when the sea recedes very far, the remains of a submarine forest are visible at low water. Occasionally it continues exposed for some days. At first sight it looks like huge masses of very stiff, black clay. When you examine it more closely you can trace as it were the form and outline of large trees, and it then strikes you that a primeval forest has been prostrated by some convulsion of nature, and mouldered into these beds of black clay. If you break a bit off, ten to one you will find it partly rotten wood, partly clay, sprinkled over with very minute particles of

what looks like powder-blue, and which I used to say was, doubtless, the remains of Eve's blue-bag.

It is dangerous to walk upon when it first appears, but after exposure to the sun has hardened the surface it can be traversed with safety.

Curious relics of the pre-Adamite world, tusks of elephants, petrified nautili, and wood are found in it. I have seen a pair of horns, black and polished as ebony, belonging to an elk of some long extinct species, that were dug up from it by a sailor, who struck his foot against one of the tips as he was walking along; and have myself pulled out ribs and vertebræ, belonging, perhaps, to that very elk.

The best time to seek for such relics is when a recurrence of stormy weather has washed away the upper crust of earth and clay, and laid more of the decomposing forest bare.

But however interesting to the scientific or geological student, to a mere lover of the picturesque these long, uncouth beds of decaying vegetable matter only added to the ugliness of the scene. I hated the place.

To me there was something oppressive and melancholy in that wide illimitable waste of waters, only broken by the long, low swell of the coming-in or retreating tide, and in the hoarse, ceaseless dash of the waves upon the

sand. There it stretched, far as eye could see, bounded only by the horizon—a wide trackless expanse, whose solitude and dreariness were rarely broken even by a sail in the offing, for all vessels knew and avoided that dangerous shore.

I used to walk on the sands with Madame St. Croix and my pupils, and gaze on its dreary desolation, and pine, with a longing no words can describe, for Hooton cliff, covered with copse wood, and carpeted with wood-anemones, and the beautiful glimpses of distant landscape between its glades—for the deep lane, whose high banks were wreathed with hedge-ivy, and starred with sweet white violets—for the mossy paths that led to the fountain, overhung by alders, and honeysuckle, and blackthorn—for the beds of bluebells that blossomed beneath the trees on either side, the trickling rill of pure water that bubbled from it, where I had so often drunk and laved my face—for the green meadows below the cliff, and the bank of purple orchises, that gleamed crimson-bright in the sunshine—for the little village and its grey, square church-tower, that looked so home-like, so peaceful, from those fields!

I looked upon that boundless muddy ocean, but I saw it not, my mind was in the old home, listening to the rooks in the park, gathering white violets in farmer Jenkinson's fields, or

gazing with deep delight on the beautiful views that presented themselves, turn which way one would.

At night I could not sleep—that melancholy murmur of the sea sounded for ever in my ears. It brought back to my mind continually where I was, and why I was there ; I could not even forget myself in dreams.

A sort of nostalgia seized on me, like that which makes the Switzer pine for his mountain home. The second winter of my stay at White Cross I became seriously ill.

As usual with me, I sought a vent for my feelings in verse.

THE CRY OF THE BROKEN-HEARTED.

WRITTEN IN SPRING 18—.

Earth, with thy wide wild heaths, and meadows golden,
With the rich promise of the long-wish'd Spring ;
Thy copses where the beech-trees are unfolding
Their silken leaves, from the brown sheath, ye bring—

With all around, the gay hues of spring flowers ;
The fanning of spring gales upon thy brow ;
Sights, feelings, sounds—the memory of past hours—
And childhood's happy time, seems present now.

Yes ! Spring comes back each year, and copse and meadow
Glow with new-opened flowers as they did then ;
Earth seems as then, all bright, without a shadow ;
But love once lost, no spring brings back again.

Here are bright skies, sweet flowers ; but the hopes,
That made earth seem so glorious in my prime,
Have sunk like daylight behind mountain slopes ;
And I am left, life's weary waste to climb.

Life's dreary waste ! O God, why hast thou given
All these warm feelings, hopes, desires, in vain ?
Why did I ever dream of bliss and Heaven ?
Only to wake to wretchedness and pain !

Why hast thou made the loving heart, and taken
From it the object of its tender love ?
Why do men roam the earth, alone, forsaken—
Dark thoughts within—darkening thy sky above ?

The beauty of the earth is not for them ;
The harmony of wind-swept woods and waves ;
Nor the birds' song—nor glittering diadem,
Formed by the gathered rain-drops on the leaves.

As night enshrouds all beauty, so one thought,
One recollection, darken's beauty—life.
My God ! ah ! why are we, thy creatures, brought
Into a world of sorrow and self-strife ?

Thou givest the bird his wings, that he may flee
At will, o'er hill and valley, wood and plain ;
His skill and industry unto the bee,
To store his food e'er winter come again.

To all thy various creatures, various powers,
Suited to each—and suited to their end ;
And giving happiness by use—but ours,
The power to love—not love ! Ah, wherefore lend ?

Why are men's fates and minds at variance still ?
Why true nobility debased and poor ?
Why have the vain and selfish wealth at will,
While nobler spirits drudge even at their door ?

Others have fathers, husbands, love ; alone
They stand, who, like the trailing plant, most need
Something to lean on. Yet we are thine own—
Thou sayest—and with our woes thy heart doth bleed.

Why should we ever build, and ever borrow
 Hope from the future, that we may endure?
Why are we ever pining for the morrow?
 Why do its wandering swamp fires yet allure?

Oh! it is bitter to watch one hope bloom,
 And die, as other hopes have bloomed and died!
To look on Spring as on a flowery tomb,
 Where our life's joys lie buried side by side!

Take me, O Father! from a world of sorrow!
 Thou hast ta'en from me love and friends—take me!
Still thou, this passionate longing for the morrow—
 This wearying search—and take me unto Thee!

At last I could struggle no longer; I was
confined to bed.

CHAPTER X.

As my disease was chiefly mental, that complete prostration of strength by which nature revenges herself on any attempt to trample down her instincts, the doctor called in by the Tanners did not exactly know what to call my complaint, or how to treat it. He gave it some learned name, sent in a quantity of medicine, and seemed to think my case dangerous.

I knew very well what ailed me. I knew that my brain had been overworked by the never-ceasing round of tasks to be heard, exercises and sums to look over, and correct. I knew that my life wanted some aliment of happiness to make its dreary monotony endurable.

I lay in my bed for days, helpless and hopeless ; mentally reviewing my prospects, and praying that it would please God to take me out of a weary world. There were plenty of governesses to fill up my place. I saw no use

that I was of; my death might advantage her who should succeed me; my life benefited nobody; and least of all myself. If I left White Cross, the next situation I obtained might be worse—for I had no positive ill-treatment to complain of, and I had known governesses who had.

At Hilton with my aunt Joan I could not live; her bitter speeches were like a perpetual blister—and what hope was there for me of any comfort in life? Happiness had been offered me, and when I stretched out my hand to grasp it, she flung it violently from me, and it would never, never be offered again. I was not like Harriet Jenkins, a woman who could consider marriage a profession: I wanted sympathy of tastes, congeniality of character, a better, higher type of my own soul—some one to cling to, and to look up to—all these requirements had met in Mr. Tracy.

And my aunt Joan had prevented my marrying him—had driven him out of the country, to die!

I might have been happy as few women in marriage. Instead, my prospect was this—to lead my present dreary existence in one family after another—thirty years, if my health enabled me to work so long; and then to end my days in solitary apartments, living upon what I had

been able to save, without tie, without hope—childless—if it please God, I would rather die now !

Then I thought of the hateful churchyard at White Cross, and I absolutely cried at the thought of being buried there. I have never been able to shake off the idea that the spirit hovers near the remains of its earthly tabernacle, waiting till that which was mortal shall put on immortality ; and I could not bear the thought of being thus chained, even after death, to that desolate spot.

It was February, and I felt sure I should never see another spring—I should die before the leaves were out. I lay and repeated to myself,

“The New Year’s coming up, but I shall never see
The May upon the blackthorn, the leaf upon the tree !”

Of course I did not express these morbid fancies—for morbid they were—to Lady Tanner, her daughters, or Madame St. Croix, when they came to visit me in my sick chamber. I should as soon have sought sympathy from statues, as revealed my inner heart to them. It was precisely because I had given no vent to my feelings, but resolutely crushed them down, and trampled upon them, that I was so ill. At last Harriet Jenkins came to see me.

"I am sorry to find you such an invalid, dear Miss Neville," said she; "but the spring will soon be here, and then you will recover rapidly."

I shook my head, and, with the melancholy desponding tone that had become habitual to me, repeated my favourite lines,

"The New Year's coming up, but I shall never see
The May upon the blackthorn, the leaf upon the tree!"

Harriet made no reply; she saw it was in vain to combat the idea that had taken possession of me, that I should die, and be buried at White Cross; and she turned the conversation. She spoke of herself and her own prospects.

"Do you know, Miss Neville," she said, "that I am afraid I shall have to tread in your steps, and become a governess!"

"You! Why?"

"Because my father is a very old man, and his infirmities increase daily. He is more than seventy-five, and I dare not hope his life will be prolonged many years. There were fifteen of us, and the others were all boys, requiring expensive educations, and a great deal of money to place them out in the world; so that he has only been able to save a trifle as a provision for my mother and myself. I do not like the thought of governessing, but I do not so much

mind for myself as for mamma, who would be left utterly alone when she needed me most."

"Harriet!"

"It is true," she answered, quietly; "and it is a dreary prospect for both of us, but especially for mamma, to leave the home where she has lived so long, and to lose all the comforts she has been used to. Mamma is seventy."

"It is indeed!" I answered, more energetically than I had spoken for weeks. "I fancied you well off—I never thought of this."

"People seldom do know the real situation of their neighbours," answered Harriet; "but I see little chance of any better prospect. If poor John had lived, we were both to have resided with him; but he is gone, and we must do the best we can. I mean to give up the interest of my share to mamma; and perhaps, with that added to her own, she may be able to board somewhere, but it will be among strangers. As for me, I must work."

My heart rushed to my throat, and seemed to choke me. I was too much grieved to speak, as I thought of this poor old lady, who had been used, for the last fifty years, to an income of a thousand a-year, and a large, well-furnished house, obliged to quit it, and to live alone in a small lodging, exposed to all the many annoyances of that comfortless life—she, who had so

many children dwelling in as dreary a solitude as that I had pictured for myself—she, who had been used to be the mistress of many servants, obliged, in her feebleness, to wait upon herself. I felt rebuked. How small and insignificant were my trials compared to hers—I had lost the lover, she would lose the faithful friend of fifty years—I had youth and strength to bear my sorrows; hers were coming upon her when her strength had failed. At last I said,

“Dear Harriet, I am very sorry for you both.”

“I knew you would be, or I should not have told you,” she answered. “But now I must go; Doctor Batt said you were to be kept quiet, and I see you look feverish and flushed. When you are better you must come and stay two or three days at the Rectory; while we are there we shall be glad to see you. Good-bye now.”

She went, but her visit had done me good: it had turned the current of my thoughts from my own sorrows to those of others. The same disposition which made me feel my own isolation so keenly made me readily sympathize with the sufferings of others. I thought less of White Cross churchyard, and more of Harriet Jenkins and her mother, that evening. In a few days she came again. The sun was shining brilliantly,

and the birds, rejoicing in the warmth, were singing gaily—but I was weaker than ever. I had had the blind let down, and the thick green curtains drawn across my window, and I had myself pulled the hangings of my French bed as close as they would come, in order to shut out the light.

My eyes ached from weakness and want of sleep; I felt as if the bright sunshine and the happiness of the world were a mockery of my wretchedness.

“How are you to-day?”

“Worse,” I said, in a doleful tone; “I told you I should never see the blackthorn-flower—I am dying by inches.”

She drew her left hand from behind her, and laid three sprays of blackthorn upon my bed.

“There!” said she, “don’t talk of never seeing the blackthorn-blossom again. I gathered those sprays for you from a large bush, as I crossed the fields between our house and the Priory. You must go and look at it when you get out; it is one sheet of white blossom.”

“Thank you! Whereabouts does it grow?”

“In the third field from the Priory. It is a very little way off: you will be able to walk there in a day or two.”

“I should like this put in water, that I may see it. I like to look at it.”

"I must draw up the curtains, then, or I can't find a tumbler to put it in. The room is so dark I can see nothing. Where will you have it put?"

"On the mantelpiece. I can see it from here."

She drew up the blind and curtains, and let in the glorious sunshine. She even opened the window for a few moments, and the perfume of the wall-flowers beneath it was wafted in on the breezes. Then she put the blackthorn in water.

The sight and scent of flowers revived me. In my morbid state of mind I had actually persuaded myself I never should see the blackthorn in flower, and there it was before my eyes. The sight of it was a medicine to me. From that moment I began to amend.

On the fifth day from that I leant on Harriet's arm, and walked to the blackthorn bush. It was a very short distance from the house, and I often had to sit down and rest by the way, but I reached it. The birds were carolling gaily, the swans sailed majestically on the calm lake, the grass sprung fresh and green in the meadows by its brink, and the young lambs ran bleating beside their mothers.

Though the country was flat and uninteresting, the verdure of the fields was so bright, and there

was such a balmy freshness in the air, that the languid blood seemed to flow more freely and healthily in my veins. The torpor which had hung over me was dispelled ; and I sat and looked with pleasure on the green grass, the happy living creatures, and the “ May upon the blackthorn, the leaf upon the tree.”

I gathered two or three sprays. As I went home, still leaning on Harriet’s arm, I noticed the nettles springing in the ditches, the white stars of the hawthorn buds beginning to unfold their bright green leaves. I carried a small nosegay home, and put it on the mantelpiece in my bed-room. In a week I was well.

If any think my illness was purely imaginary, they will do me great injustice : it was very real. The sea-air produces congestion of the liver with some people : it does with me. I was seldom free from intensely painful headaches while I remained at White Cross. A sense of languor and weariness, that no sorrow or suffering in any other place ever brought on, weighed always upon me there, and I felt life as an intolerable burden which I had not strength left to carry. Add to this, that with a heart pining and thirsting after human affection, I could win no love, no regard from any of those around me, do what I would ; and that I carried at my heart a secret sorrow, under which many a young girl

before me has sunk and died in happier surrounding circumstances than mine—and I think the sternest and coldest will acquit me of weak sentimentalism. I had not yielded weakly; I had fought against depression, against discontent, against remembrance, by unceasing exertion, until my health utterly gave way.

I must do Lady Tanner and her daughters the justice to say that every possible attention was paid me in my illness. I had good medical advice, and all sorts of jellies and nice things to tempt my sickly appetite. They came in turns to see me, and one of the young ladies read some religious book, or the bible, to me, for a short time every day. But their kindness did me no good, for they put no heart into it—it was all cold duty. They did not give me that for which I was pining—love and sympathy. They were still Sir James Tanner's wealthy, high-born daughters, and I the poor dependent governess, whose want of riches made me, notwithstanding my gentlewoman's education and my ancient lineage, in their ideas as far beneath them as the uneducated cottars on their estates.

Human beings are created gregarious. They pine in solitude; and Crusoe in his desert island was not more completely isolated than the young, pretty, delicate, well-educated, and well-born girl

who earns her bread as a governess is, by the unchristian pride, the conventional maxims, of society. In every other mode of existence, every other way of earning a living, there is companionship; but she is debarred from the society of her fellows—she, whose overtaxed nerves, wearied by the ceaseless repetition of lessons, and all the trying ordeal of a teacher's life, most needs the solace and refreshment of change of scene and friendly intercourse, after her diurnal labours are over, to strengthen and recruit her for the fatigues of another day—spends the evening hours in lonely solitude, or, as a suffered and unwelcome guest, in the family circle of her employers.

No wonder so many governesses go mad!

Thus, I felt no gratitude to Lady Tanner or her daughters for showing me the same attentions they would have shown to their sick maid—for the stately courtesy which they, as queens, showed to me, a subject.

Harriet's sprays of blackthorn did me more good than all their cold civilities. The kindness she showed me came from the heart.

I was ashamed to think how I had undervalued her the day she dined at the Priory. I saw now why she was so anxious to marry. I thought it a happiness she did not entertain the same highflown sentiments on the subject that I did,

but could reconcile herself to seeking a provision in marriage; and only regretted that, with such prudent dispositions, she had met no success.

CHAPTER XI.

IT has often struck me that the history of a life resembles a spider's web. The different characters we become acquainted with, and the events which arise from that intercourse, may seem to lie far apart, and to have no possible connection with each other ; yet it will be found that they are all united together by fine, almost invisible, threads, and tend to one given end, as the lines of the web radiate to one common centre. Afterwards, when our destiny is fulfilled, it is curious to look back and see the influence that events, apparently very trivial in themselves, exerted over it, and to trace how the fortunes of one person are closely interwoven with the fortunes of another, with which they appear at first wholly unconnected.

I heard occasionally from Georgiana Stanley. Her letters were like most schoolgirls'. She said that she often wished for me, though she was

very happy at school; told me what new girls had come that half; gave me their names and parentage, and informed me whether they were pretty or ugly, clever or stupid. She likewise informed me what pieces of music she was practising, and what new songs she sang; and mentioned in a postscript that mamma had got a new baby, called Jessie. They were nice, natural, frank-hearted epistles, all the more valuable from their very incoherence, which proved them to be the genuine outpourings of the girl's own affectionate heart. I would not have given a *sou* for a neatly-written, mawkish, insipid composition of polite phrases, and cut-and-dry good maxims, and patronizing advice, such as the Miss Tanners would have written, had they deigned to correspond with a governess. Georgie's letters were like herself—full of inequalities and blunders, but genuine heart of oak, worth all the veneer and French polish in the world. I locked the one safely up in my bureau, and gave the other a place in my inmost heart, beside Anne and Melusina Beauchamp.

In the third year of my residence at White Cross Priory I received a letter from her, and thus it ran :

“MY DEAR LIZZIE,—You are a shabby old thing for not writing to me oftener, and I should be jealous of those Miss Tanners, only I can see

with half an eye you don't like them. Now, don't tell a fib and say you do, for I know you don't. What do you think has happened? Guess! Papa has got the living of Brooklynn, in Yorkshire; and now I really do hope we shall meet before very long.

"It is a great deal better living than Weston, which is a good thing for papa. He went last week to be inducted. I made him so cross—for I told Mrs. Williams he was indicted, and she went and told him, and laughed about it; wasn't it a shame? As he passed through Burton, on his way back, he called for me, and brought me home to help ma to pack, and to bid goodbye to the old place and all our kind neighbours.

"Papa says Brooklynn's a sweet place, with a brook running through it, that falls over some high rocks near the village, in a beautiful cascade—and that's why it's called Brooklynn.

"You may fancy what a muddle we're in packing; ma's almost beside herself; and I'm so busy I don't know what to do, only I *would* write, and tell you the good news.

"Old Mrs. Dobbs is dead; and Jem Wilson, the carpenter—of course, you remember him, for he put up the shelves in our school-room—has jilted poor Ann, and married farmer Adams' daughter for her money. The boys say they

hope she'll tease his heart out ; and I think she will ; for I saw her at church on Sunday, and she's got a sharp peaked nose, and a pinched-in mouth, just as if she was always saying 'miminy-piminy stewed prunes,'* like Miss Loftus, who left this half. Poor Ann sits at the nursery window, and cries, as she looks out at the cottage where she thought she should live, and forgets all ma tells her to do ; so she's not much help ; and Lucy, and Beatrice, and I, run up and down stairs, and fetch things for ma and nurse to pack, from morning to night. I've packed all the linen, and papa and I packed the books ; but I won't pack ma's fine drawing-room ornaments, for if they get broken, in travelling down, she'll say it was my fault, and I hadn't packed them properly. I just wish you saw ma and nurse, on their knees before a great box, consulting how they shall pack the globe that holds the gold-fish. I couldn't help laughing if they broke it between them, for they're always telling me how awkwardly I pack. The fishes are put in an old soup-tureen for the present, and Lucy's going to carry them to Brooklynn in a small basin, which just fits in her work-basket. I

* To repeat "miminy-piminy stewed prunes" continually is a famous school-girl receipt for producing a small mouth. Who invented it I don't know ; but I have known it practised by girls in various parts of England. French school-girls have an equivalent for it, which I forget.

daresay they won't like the journey; and I wanted ma to give them away, but she won't.

"I'm going to stay at home till they all leave, instead of having my usual holidays, which I'm to spend at school, because pa says it's such a long, expensive journey to Yorkshire. Papa does not intend me to return home any more till I leave for good.

"The boys, and Lucy, and Beatrice, Julia and Emma, send their best love, and baby blows you a kiss. I send you twenty—and remain, my dear Lizzie, your affectionate friend and former pupil,

"GEORGIANA STANLEY.

"P.S. What fun it will be to meet in Yorkshire, won't it?"

I read this letter twice before I locked it up. It was with a sorrowful feeling of regret that I reflected how little likely my warm-hearted pupil's wishes were to be realized. Each Riding of Yorkshire is a county in itself. I lived on the sea-coast of one; Brooklynn lay on the road toward Kendal, on the extreme boundary of the other. It seemed to me that for all prospect or chance there was of our meeting the Stanleys might as well have remained at Weston; but I was heartily glad Mr. Stanley had been presented to a valuable living, which would better

enable him to educate and provide for his large family.

I sat down and wrote my sincere congratulations. When I had sealed my epistle and put it in the letter-box, I fell to considering the hard lot of governesses.

For two or three years, perhaps, I should hear occasionally from Georgiana Stanley ; gradually our correspondence would cease—nearer and dearer ties would leave no room for me in her heart ; but she would probably retain through life a kind remembrance of me. That was all I could expect.

I tried to satisfy myself by reflecting that the consciousness of duty fulfilled was a recompense in itself ; but I could not bring myself to feel content with a life passed without love.

Then, again, I thought sadly of what might have been but for my aunt Joan.

I made up my mind I had lost sight of the Stanleys for ever.

How could I suppose that Georgiana Stanley would ever influence my fate ? How could I imagine that when I took such pains to win her stubborn heart, and lay the foundation of improvement in her character, I was at the same time laying the deep foundations of my own happiness ?

At White Cross all went on as usual. We

prayed, and listened to edifying books and improving conversations afterwards, and passed the rest of the day in the customary dull routine of ceaseless tasks.

Some of these conversations struck me as so singularly at variance with Christian precepts, that I noted them down.

Lady Tanner's sister, Mrs. Wriothesley Beaumont, Anne and Melusina Beauchamp, were the only guests at the Priory, one day when the inmates of the school-room "enjoyed the privilege" of listening to a sermon on Christian Humility, and "an improving conversation" after it.

Here is the conversation, word for word :—

"Who is that sermon you have been reading by, Lucilla?" asked Mrs. Wriothesley Beaumont.

"The Bishop of Kirton, dear aunt."

"The Bishop of Kirton—I don't exactly remember who he is? Is he not a Doctor Burton?"

"Yes, aunt, dear. He was tutor in Lord Middleton's family. He is a most excellent man, devoted to doing good in his parish, and a most eloquent preacher. I hear he has just published another volume of sermons; we must get them."

"Talking of tutors," said Anne Beauchamp, "how does Sir James like Mr. Haultain?"

"Oh! very well, I believe. He is at Oxford with Charley now," replied Miss Lucilla.

"Yes, and it is such a relief," said Miss Agatha ; "I don't, of course, mean dear Charley's absence—but to get rid of the tutor."

"Certainly the presence of a stranger is rather a restraint in a family circle," said Anne.

"Oh ! it's not that," said Miss Lucilla ; "but it's so difficult to know how to behave to a brother's tutor."

"I should think it was very easy," remarked Melusina ; "can't you treat him like any other gentleman ?"

"Like a gentleman, of course ; but then—one wants to be civil to him, but not have him fancy himself one's equal, and pay one attention," said Miss Tanner.

"Do you think the Bishop of Kirton your equal ?" asked the impracticable Melusina.

"Doctor Burton ? Of course. He is a most charming man ; not the least set up by his station or dignity, but so truly religious, and humble-minded."

"A most delightful man," observed Lady Tanner, with a smile of great benignity.

"And his wife, Lady Elizabeth, is a sweet woman," said Miss Matilda.

"She was Lady Elizabeth Rivers, Earl Rivers' daughter, I rather think ?" observed Melusina.

"Yes, she was."

"Then an Earl's daughter is a fit match for a

bishop—consequently, I suppose, Lucilla, you or your sisters would not think it *infra dig.* to marry a bishop?"

"Certainly not. Do you suppose we should?"

"I did not know, after what you said about tutors. Dr. Burton was tutor in Lord Middleton's family before he was a bishop."

"I know he was. Most bishops are tutors in some great family first—it is a step in the ladder of preferment," said Miss Tanner.

"You couldn't, any of you, have married him then?" asked the perverse Melusina.

"Of course not. How can you ask such a question, Lina? A tutor and a bishop are very different persons."

"So it seems. As different as light and darkness, and yet the earth is the same world by night as by day. There are the same mountains and valleys, woods and streams; but dim, indistinct, and faintly seen, like the tutor's merits: or to take another simile, the tutor is the uncut diamond, the bishop is the same stone set in gold. It strikes me the value of the ring lies in the stone, not in the setting," said Melusina.

"That speech is so like you, Lina. Of course you know what I mean well enough. A bishop is any lady's equal, and a tutor is not," replied Lucilla.

"Not any tutor, I acknowledge," returned

Melusina ; " but Dr. Burton was the son of the Rector of Chiselhurst, the grandson of the Archbishop of York. Agatha is engaged to the Rector of Stockton. I do not see that he is any higher in rank than your brother's tutor, Mr. Haultain, who is of a good old Cornish family, and the son of a post-captain in the Navy."

Lucilla seemed a little disturbed, and replied, " You don't choose to understand, Melusina—I see the difference."

And I am sure she did. With all their professions of admiration for Christian humility, pious character, and cultivated mind, it was wealth and high social position only that could attract the Miss Tanners.

Among the ladies who visited at the Priory was a Miss St. Maur. She was clever and accomplished ; the Miss Tanners rather liked her. I had seen her several times at " the readings." Once I chanced to hear Miss Lucilla say, " She would have a gentlewoman's small fortune—about ten thousand pounds."

Unfortunately her father, Admiral St. Maur, speculated in certain foreign bonds, and lost all his fortune. He had a large family. It was thought desirable that Leonora St. Maur should go out as a governess or companion.

Naturally, she applied to her friends the Miss Tanners, who, having a very numerous circle of

acquaintance, were people likely to be able to assist her in obtaining a situation. They expressed much interest in her change of fortune, and they invited her to White Cross Priory. She came.

"Our friend and relation, Lady Derwent, wants a companion and reader," I heard Miss Agatha say to her one day. "Lady Derwent is a most delightful person; she is a woman of very great talent; and as you are yourself of a literary turn, I should think the occupation would suit you exactly."

"I should like it very much," replied Miss St. Maur.

"There is one thing—of course, Miss St. Maur, you would understand that if visitors came in, you would be expected not to speak, or join in the conversation."

Miss St. Maur coloured deeply and painfully, up to the very roots of her hair. She made no reply, and the subject was dropped then, and for ever.

For me, I marvelled at the hardness of heart and coolness with which Agatha, a young girl of eighteen, could tell a woman of seven and twenty, who had frequently been thought worthy of an invitation to the Priory, that, now her father had lost his fortune, she must no longer consider herself as a gentlewoman among gentle-

women, but as a paid dependent, whose business it was

“——— To hear and to obey,
No more dare slave, to ‘English lady’ say.”

An evil feeling came over me. I wished Sir James Tanner might lose his fortune, and that the Miss Tanners might have to go out as governesses, as I had known a baronet’s daughter obliged to do.

There is something terrible in the Mammon-worship of England—in the way it smothers every noble and generous sentiment. That there must be a difference of ranks, I admit—that a great difference in customs and manners separates the middle classes from the highest is true, though the prevalence of education diminishes that year by year; but that people should treat their own former intimates as inferiors, merely because, through no fault, they have lost their fortune, happens nowhere but in England.

Abroad a man may be poor, and yet considered a gentleman; a woman stand at the wash-tub—as duchesses are doing weekly near Tours—without being deserted by their friends.

Truly we are a nation of shopkeepers; for we venerate nothing but wealth!

After that conversation, Miss St. Maur asked

Lady Tanner's leave to spend the two days that yet remained of her visit in the schoolroom, that she might see the routine of the lessons ; but I think she chiefly wished to escape the condescending pity of the Miss Tanners.

She and I walked down together that evening to the beach. It was a beautiful September night. The sands were firm and dry, and the tide was slowly coming in. The shades of evening softened and veiled the dreariness of the landscape ; and the dark colour of the sea, at that hour, harmonized with the universal tint of grey. The sky was clear and bright—light fleecy clouds floated athwart it ; and the full harvest-moon cast a broad line of white radiance on the waves.

“ See,” said I to my companion, “ I have often fancied that must be the path to heaven—I could dream that angels were descending and ascending along it.”

“ Do they ever come to earth?” said Leonora ; “ and if they do, what must they think of man's paltry pride!”

I knew she was thinking of what had occurred in the morning, and I replied,

“ I should think they pitied it. You have seen this beach by day, Miss St. Maur, then it looks dreary and desolate : now in the softening light of the moon, and with those countless stars

sparkling upon the water, it is inexpressibly beautiful. I fancy true religion should be like moonlight—calm, soothing, holy; veiling inconsistencies; shedding a soft light on what is dark and sorrowful; and as in its appointed course it traverses the earth, leaving behind it a radiant track, like that of the moon over the waves, for others to follow."

We walked some time longer. A soft breeze came from the shore; the waves rippled on, and broke in white foam at our feet: just where the far expanse of the horizon met the sea, the clouds suddenly parted—the sky opened—we saw a dazzling splendour too bright to gaze upon—it seemed as if that shining way really was the path to heaven, and the walls of the Eternal City were revealed to us, glowing in crimson and gold. It was a flash of summer lightning.

The holy beauty of nature shed balm on our troubled spirits: we returned to the house calmed and comforted.

CHAPTER XII.

FOR some months I had seen little of Harriet Jenkins. My time was not my own, and I seldom had it in my power to go to the Rectory, while Harriet was kept at home by the increasing illness of her father. For the last two years he had been obliged to keep a curate, and rumour, who is always busy in country villages, said that he was engaged to Miss Jenkins. Whether she was too busy love-making, or whether the state of her father's health prevented her from seeing any one, I do not know; but for some months she had not invited me to the Rectory.

One Saturday afternoon I walked there, and was admitted. The two old people sat in their chairs on each side of the fire, though it was early in September and oppressively hot. I looked at them, and was shocked at the change

a few months had made in their appearance. I noticed then, what I have since observed to be generally the case, that old age seems to come in a day. For years, anxiety, labour, and sorrow are sapping the foundations unobserved; suddenly the fortress falls a ruin. When I first saw Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins, at White Cross Priory, they appeared two hale middle-aged people; now I saw they were very old. The superstructure was undermined, the walls tottered to their fall.

Each put out a thin shaky hand, and said it was long since they had seen me. I replied I had called many times, but was told Dr. Jenkins was ill.

"Yes," said he, "I have been ill, very ill; I am so now; but I am glad to see my friends while I can."

Harriet welcomed me gravely, but kindly. She, too, seemed aged, and altered. I sat with them a short time. When I rose to come away, the old man took both my hands, and said in a trembling voice,

"Good-bye, Miss Neville—God bless you!"

I saw he was thinking that he should never see me again.

A week afterwards I heard Dr. Jenkins was dead.

"Now, I hope we shall have an active, religious man, who will look after the schools, and do some good in the parish," was Lady Tanner's comment on the news.

"Yes, I *do* hope the new incumbent will be a very different person from Dr. Jenkins," said Miss Lucilla.

There was not one word of sympathy for the bereaved family. Sometime afterwards, one Saturday afternoon, I was taking a solitary walk, when I met Mrs. Batt, the doctor's wife.

"Oh! Miss Neville," she exclaimed, "have you heard about those poor Jenkins?"

"Yes, I heard on Monday that Dr. Jenkins was dead."

"But did you hear of the terrible situation in which he has left his family?"

"No, not precisely. Harriet once told me she feared her mother and herself would be very slenderly provided for."

"Slenderly! My dear, they have nothing!—nothing. That old furniture will not sell for what will pay the funeral expenses. Doctor Batt's bill must go unpaid; indeed, he would scorn to send it in, when he knows their distress. God bless him! he would rather give them a ten-pound note than take anything from them. I don't know what is to become of Mrs. Jenkins.

The old man had saved up four thousand pounds ; he was induced to lend it on mortgage. I don't understand business, and it's a long story ; but the upshot is, the man who borrowed it is bankrupt, and they are ruined. The old man blamed himself for having been led to make such an investment, and could not bear it talked of ; but he never held up his head after the news came—it was that which really killed him. No wonder Batt's medicines did him no good. You know, my dear, the cleverest man cannot heal a broken heart."

"No, nor old age, Mrs. Batt. Any way, I should suppose Dr. Jenkins's days were numbered ; but I am sorry his last moments were embittered by anxiety for poor old Mrs. Jenkins and Harriet. I wish I could help them."

"So do I, I am sure. Batt will not accept a farthing. He is gone there now, for poor Mrs. Jenkins has been confined to bed ever since her husband's death. She would totter about and try and nurse him, and now she is ill herself."

"I am very sorry—it is a fresh anxiety for Harriet. What are they to do ? "

"Why, this is what they intend. Harriet talked it over with Batt. She made no effort at concealment. She is to marry her father's late curate, Mr. Robson—that is a provision for her.

He has lately got the perpetual curacy of East Bourne, as you know, and only stayed on here to oblige Dr. Jenkins, the archbishop permitting his non-residence, under the circumstances. But he cannot marry her mother too, for he has not a farthing exclusive of his curacy, and that is only a hundred a year, out of which he will have to be at the head of a parish, and to keep himself, his wife and child ; for you know his first wife left a little girl. Still, the marriage secures poor Harriet a shelter, and she was not sufficiently well-educated for a governess in these days."

"But what is to become of the poor old mother?"

"She told Batt she had taken a cottage in her own county, Durham, at five pounds a year rent. Quite a labourer's cottage, with a brick floor to it. Just think of that poor old woman at seventy-two, leaving that nice comfortable Rectory, with its warm parlours and carpeted floors, for a little, nasty, draughty, brick-floored cottage. There were tears in Batt's eyes when he told me. I should not wonder if he paid the two first years' rent himself—it would be just like him. I tell him his money must be red hot, and burn a hole in his pocket," said Mrs. Batt, pretending to find fault, but evidently justly proud of her husband's benevolence.

"But the many sons—are there none among them that can help their mother?"

"I fear not. The eldest, you know, failed in business a year ago, and is in great difficulties himself. I do not know how he and his wife exist. Poor John, who had a good living, died; as did one or two others whom I never knew. Geoffrey was doing very well as an architect in London before he fell from a scaffolding and injured his spine. For the last three years, as you know, he has been dependent on his parents for a maintenance; but he was a dutiful, good son while he had it in his power to assist them. He is to go into Durham with Mrs. Jenkins. The only one that could give any help is Ben, and twelve months must elapse before they can write to him and receive his answer. But I must hurry home—we dine at three o'clock to-day. Good-bye."

We shook hands, and I returned to the Priory, grieving over the melancholy history I had just heard. I wished a subscription could be raised for poor Mrs. Jenkins. Two hundred and fifty pounds had been collected in a very few days by Mr. Stanley, for a clergyman's widow near Weston, whose husband, dying suddenly, left her totally unprovided for; and this was a case of far greater distress, for the former was a healthy young woman, able to exert herself;

while neither Mrs. Jenkins nor her son Geoffrey could do so. The more I thought of this scheme, the more feasible it seemed. I knew that neither Mrs. Jenkins nor Harriet would feel wounded by such a proposition; and surely the Tanners, who had been their neighbours forty years, and who were always getting up subscriptions for something or other, would not see an old lady of seventy-two, and her crippled helpless son, reduced from a life of comfort to want, without doing something to aid them!

Full of these thoughts, I entered the school-room before going upstairs to take off my bonnet and scarf, hoping to find some of the elder Miss Tanners there, and to interest them for Mrs. Jenkins.

Miss Lucilla was giving one of her sisters a drawing-lesson, and I repeated to her the sad story I had just heard, concluding with,

“Don’t you think something could be done to help her, Miss Lucilla? It seems so sad that an old woman of seventy-two should have to leave that comfortable Rectory, and go and live in a brick-floored cottage like Thomas Green’s.”

“Dr. Jenkins had an excellent living. They should have been more prudent, and saved,” replied Miss Lucilla.

"But they had such a large family—sixteen children to educate and place out—that Dr. Jenkins could not save anything till very lately. Latterly he had been economising. Mrs. Batt told me he had saved up four thousand pounds, as a provision for his wife, Geoffrey, and Harriet. Unhappily he was advised by his lawyer to place it on mortgage, and the borrower has become bankrupt."

"He ought not to have speculated in any way, but placed it in the Bank of England."

"It would have been better if he had. But, Miss Lucilla, could not a subscription be raised, or something be done for them? Mrs. Batt told me there was no chance of their ever getting a farthing from that mortgage."

Miss Lucilla raised her head and looked at me, arching her eyebrows in surprise at my presumption, and replied, as she went on coolly cutting her pencil,

"They must do as they can. Mrs. Jenkins can live with one of her sons."

"They are all too poor themselves to help her."

"Well, Miss Jenkins is going to be married —there will be a home for the mother."

"Mr. Robson has but one hundred a-year to keep himself, his child, and Harriet. She is not going to live with them. She has taken a

little cottage in Durham—only think what sort of a place it must be, at five pounds a-year rent! Think of her in her old age and ill health, and of that poor cripple, losing every comfort in life, having to live in a draughty, brick-floored cottage, without a servant!"

"They must get on as they can. It is well they have even a brick-floored cottage. They must have known Dr. Jenkins would die sometime, and ought to have provided better," replied Miss Lucilla, in a tone which indicated plainly enough that she desired the subject might be dropped.

I thought "how hard-hearted are the rich," and went with a heavy heart to change my dress. In passing through the corridor I stumbled upon Lady Tanner and her eldest daughter. I told my story, and received the same harsh answers that Miss Lucilla had given me, only Lady Tanner's curtness of reply shewed she was displeased at my presumption in speaking to her on the subject at all.

These three conversations will shew why I derived no benefit from all the religious readings and long prayers at White Cross Priory. It appeared to me a mere mockery for people to talk so much and so continually about religion, while they evinced such a want of common feeling, charity, and humility. I professed less goodness, but I

felt I was better than they were—not so wrapped up in spiritual pride, not so indifferent to the sufferings of others.

I went up to my room. I took out of a drawer a purse that I had lately netted, and put into it five pounds out of my last quarter's salary, which, as it happened, Lady Tanner had paid me the day before. I scribbled a hasty note to Harriet, told her how much I felt indebted to her father, and mother, and herself for all their kindness to me—that I had heard of all their troubles, and hoped Mrs. Jenkins would not refuse to accept the enclosed from me, as a remembrance of her goodness. I made the purse and note into a small parcel, and, putting on my bonnet and scarf, I took it myself to the Rectory, and bade the servant who came to the door to be sure and give it into Miss Jenkins's own hand. Fearing to be late for tea, I almost ran there and back, and arrived at home, hot, jaded, and exhausted. But I felt happier—I had given my mite.

This year proved a melancholy one to others besides the Jenkins. The good Sir Raoul Beauchamp was gathered to his fathers. Beauchamp Abbey was also the scene of mourning, but there natural sorrow was not embittered by the addition of poverty.

His death was a severe affliction to Anne and

Melusina, but they had not to grieve at the same time for their father's death and for the loss of every comfort in life; and his widow was amply dowered.

My stay at White Cross was drawing to an end, although I knew it not. Henceforth I shall speak little of the Tanners, but briefly recapitulate the causes which led to my leaving them.

When Georgiana Stanley's education was completed, she left the Miss Carpenters' school, and returned to her father's house.

She had matured into a striking and elegant girl, endowed with considerable beauty and wonderful musical talent.

Soon after her return, her father, who was excessively proud of her, took her to a hunt ball.

She was the belle of the evening.

Among those whom she attracted was young Sir Harry Beauchamp, who had succeeded his father, Sir Raoul, in the baronetcy. He met her afterwards at the house of various neighbours, and her enchanting voice completed the conquest her beauty had begun.

A fine, dashing, healthy, good-tempered girl—something resembling his sister Melusina in character—Georgiana was precisely the person to captivate a proud, shy, taciturn man like Sir

Harry. Other people feared his satire, and drew back from him ; Georgiana was perfectly at her ease. Her vivacity amused and drew him out. She was pleased with the attention of a handsome, fashionable man, some years older than herself, and very innocently showed by her manner how much she liked him. He had never been liked for himself before. He had been courted as heir to Beauchamp Abbey, and turned out, and hunted by manœuvring, managing mothers and their marriageable daughters before now ; but it was new and delightful to excite genuine admiration. It gave him pleasure to see that when any discussion arose in conversation, Georgiana's eye instantly sought his face, and that she listened eagerly to hear what was his opinion. He had been used to be feared ; her frank, ready confidence charmed him. He saw at once that she had laid no plan to catch him, and that it was her extreme youth and innocence which made her, without knowing it, betray emotions an older woman would have concealed ; and he was far too noble a man to throw back the girlish heart he had won.

He had begun by only admiring her, but her love compelled his in return. Very shortly after their acquaintance commenced he tendered her his hand, and was accepted with smiles and blushes. Of course her parents were delighted.

He was his own master ; there was nothing to wait for—they were married.

Of all this I was duly informed. Strangely enough, I, and none of her schoolfellows, remained Georgiana's chosen friend. I was favoured with such marvellous accounts of Harry's goodness, Harry's cleverness, and Harry's beauty, that I almost thought I must have been blind never to have discovered these things in former years.

I was invited to the wedding, but, of course, could not go to it ; and Lady Beauchamp wrote me all her regrets upon the subject, interspersed with glowing descriptions of her happiness.

Two such kindred characters as Georgiana and Melusina could not fail to be friends. They told each other all their past history, and great was the surprise, many the exclamations, when it turned out that I was the intimate friend of both.

They laid their heads together to deliver me honourably from what Melusina declared was “worse than Egyptian bondage.”

The marriage, of course, led to a round of invitations and parties ; and in all the visiting that ensued, the two conspirators never ceased inquiring after a situation as governess for an intimate friend of theirs. At last their perseverance was rewarded. One lady did know a gentleman who required a governess for his only

daughter. “ What salary would their friend require ? ”

“ A hundred and twenty guineas a-year,” replied Lady Beauchamp ; “ but as she is a gentlewoman, although not rich—in fact, a relation of mine and Melusina’s—I think she would take a hundred guineas, if she were treated as one of the family, and made comfortable. I owe every thing to her, for she was my governess ; so it’s natural I should be interested in her obtaining a situation where her merits would be appreciated.”

“ How could you ask such a sum, Georgie ? ” said Melusina, when the former narrated the success of her inquiries, on her return to the Abbey.

“ Because I know the world. You may laugh, Harry, but one doesn’t go to school for nothing. A school is a little world, and one good of going to it is that it teaches one to look sharp, and have one’s wits about one. If you want to get on in the world, you must set a proper value on yourself. ‘ Bode o’ a silken goun,’ says the Scotch proverb, ‘ and ye’ll hae the sleeve o’t.’ ”

“ Upon my word,” said Sir Harry, laughing, “ I have been finely taken in ; I thought I married an unsophisticated girl, and she proves a perfect woman of the world. I’ll sue for a divorce.”

"Then you won't get it, for you can't prove ill usage."

"I'll swear I was cheated."

"Won't do. You were at a public school, and ought to have learned not to buy a pig in a poke."

"Well, but when you've done fighting with Harry, I want to know what Mrs. Aston said to your modest demands?" observed Melusina.

"Said?—she looked very grave, and said that was a great deal of money. 'Not for a person like Miss Neville,' said I; 'indeed, I am not sure she could accept a situation in Mr. Trevor's family at all; for, to tell you the truth, she does not even know I am making inquiries for her. Lady Tanner is perfectly satisfied with her, and she has no thoughts of leaving White Cross; but the sea air does not agree with her health, and she has five pupils. Melusina and I are anxious to find her a situation with some nice family living in an inland place, where she would have good health and more leisure.' As soon as Mrs. Aston heard Lizzie was not to be had, she perked up her ears, just as I knew she would; and said, 'Hum—um! it certainly is a great recommendation to any governess to have brought up Lady Beauchamp, and to have resided three years in Sir James Tanner's family. If my cousin, Mr. Trevor, should feel disposed to give a hundred

a-year—’ ‘A hundred guineas!’ said I, ‘she ought to have a hundred and twenty; but from a member of your family, Mrs. Aston, where she would be sure of being treated like the gentlewoman she is, I know she would accept a hundred guineas.’ Thereupon she said she would write to Mr. Trevor at once—and I consider the thing done.”

“I shall be glad if it is,” said Melusina; “but when does Mr. Trevor want her?”

“I don’t know exactly; but as I wished to make her going there at all as great a favour as possible, I said, ‘that if Mr. Trevor desired to engage Miss Neville, he must lose no time about it, for I had already had other inquiries about her; nor could she go to anyone for three months time, as she could not possibly behave unhandsomely to Lady Tanner, who had no intention of parting with her.’ In short, I tickled my trout very nicely indeed.”

“So it seems,” said Sir Harry, drily.

“And it’s caught!” cried Georgiana, triumphantly.

“Don’t reckon your trouts till they are cooked,” remarked Sir Harry.

“But,” Georgiana replied, “I tell you the thing is done. If Lizzie had been very poor, and in great want of a situation immediately, and had all the virtues in the world, and all the

accomplishments to boot, Mr. Trevor would never have thought of her. But as she is residing with Lady Tanner, who has no wish to part with her, and is difficult to get, he'll engage her at once. I wish I had asked Mrs. Aston two hundred a year."

"Upon my word, Georgie, you are coming it strong," said Sir Harry.

Georgiana was right. In a few days she received a letter from Mrs. Aston, enclosing an open one from Mr. Trevor to me, in which he offered me the situation of governess to his only daughter, whom he stated to be about nine years old, with a salary of one hundred and twenty guineas per annum. He also said that, as a near connection of Lady Beauchamp's, I should be treated like a member of his family, with every possible consideration.

"There!" said Georgiana, as she laid the letter before her husband; "my trout is caught—I leave it to Lizzie to give him a dressing."

If the reader wants to know how I came to overhear this conversation, and suspects me to be a descendant of Fine-ear in the fairy-tale, who could hear the plants coming up through the ground, my answer is, that I did not hear it—Georgiana wrote me word what had passed, when she enclosed Mr. Trevor's letter to me; and I have copied it, to account for my leaving White Cross.

I carried Mr. Trevor's letter at once to Lady Tanner, and told her that as it was too advantageous an offer to refuse, I hoped she would not feel offended if I gave her notice that I should leave her at the end of three months.

"I certainly am annoyed, Miss Neville," she replied, "so far as I myself am concerned; for you know I had no intention of parting with you. But I should think it wrong to prevent your accepting an infinitely more lucrative situation. I will write to Mr. Trevor, and express my perfect approbation of the manner in which you have fulfilled your duties here."

"I am much obliged to your ladyship. May I also make one request?—Lady Beauchamp, and Miss Melusina Beauchamp, desired that I would ask you not to mention the amount of salary I received here to Mr. Trevor. I should not ask this favour, were I not enjoined to do so;" and I showed her the passage in my letter.

"Certainly not," said she, returning the letter to me; "Lady Beauchamp is perfectly right. There is not the slightest necessity for my informing Mr. Trevor what salary I gave. I know you to be a prudent young person, and very properly endeavouring to lay by a provision for old age. I should be sorry to interfere with so laudable an aim. This day three months you are at liberty." She inclined her head in sign of dis-

missal, and I thanked her, and withdrew.

Sooner than I expected, the chain was broken—I was free.

I wrote to inform my aunt Diana of the good fortune that had befallen me. In her reply she congratulated me upon the prospect of a pleasanter situation and a larger remuneration than I had yet had ; and expressed a wish that, if I could do it without inconveniencing Lady Tanner, I should spend a short time at Hilton, and take my aunt Joan's place, who was going her usual round of visits, before I went to Trevor-Court Rectory. She and my aunt Theodosia would have pleasure in seeing me again.

I did not like asking any favour of Lady Tanner, and I put the letter quietly away in my desk, and said nothing of its contents to anyone.

But about three weeks afterwards, when I was “enjoying the privilege” of sitting in the drawing-room, and listening to Bishop Horne upon the Psalms, the butler entered with a silver tray in his hand, on which lay several letters. Two of these he handed to Lady Tanner.

“ Shall I stop, mamma dearest, or go on with my reading ? ” asked Miss Tanner.

She examined the handwriting and seals.

“ Wait, my darling ; perhaps they may require answering by return of post. I rather think they

are concerning the young person I wrote to inquire about as governess."

Lady Tanner and her daughter never called a governess a young lady ; governesses, ladies-maids, and all such subordinates, were "young persons."

"Are they, dear mamma ? "

"Yes, dear Eloise. This is from her late employer, the Honourable Mrs. Trevennan—a most excellent character. Her sole reason for parting with Miss Wroughton was her imperfect acquaintance with French and music, which, you know, will be of no consequence here. She states her to possess good manners, and to be a sound English scholar ; and says she is a high-principled, serious young person, who would esteem it a privilege to live in a family where she could enjoy gospel ministration. Really, it seems quite providential that I should have required a governess at this time."

"And when will she be disengaged, dear mother ? " asked Miss Agatha.

"Oh, as to that, she is at liberty now. But as she has a home with her father, who is curate of St. Medards, when she is unemployed, she says in her letter, 'that she would be willing to wait some months to obtain a situation in a family who profess Christ, and where she could have the privilege of religious conversation.'

She says she thinks our morning readings—of which she has heard from Mrs. Trevennan—must be quite delightful ; and observes truly, ‘ that there are few families where she could hope to enjoy so much opportunity of spiritual improvement.’ Read her letter, Eloise dearest.”

Miss Tanner took it, and read it aloud for public benefit.

“ What a very nice letter ! ” she said, when she had concluded.

“ So respectful to you, mamma, and such a proper sense of her own humble position in life,” remarked Miss Lucilla.

“ She is evidently a truly pious person. As you say, dear mamma, it is quite providential that she should be disengaged when you wanted a governess,” said Miss Matilda.

As I did not want to delay their obtaining such a treasure of piety and humility by a single instant, and desired, besides, to visit my aunts, I ventured to say,

“ Since Miss Wroughton is at liberty, and could come to you at any time, perhaps your ladyship could dispense with my services at an early period. My aunts are very anxious I should pass a little time with them before I take another situation ; but I refrained from mentioning their wish until I should know your ladyship had heard of some one to replace me.”

"Your conduct has been very proper, Miss Neville. Of course I could not have permitted you to have left before the expiration of the three months, had I not succeeded in obtaining a governess to suit me. But as I have decided on engaging Miss Wroughton, that alters the matter completely. I will write and inquire when she will be able to come to me, and as soon as her answer arrives you can fix the day of your departure. Serena, my dearest, give me my writing-case."

Miss Wroughton agreed to come in a fortnight; but as she was to arrive on a Saturday, and my cross-country journey would take two days to accomplish, I settled, to avoid Sunday travelling, that I would leave White Cross the Monday after her arrival. I must confess I was anxious to see this paragon of governesses.

Meanwhile, I availed myself of one of the half-holidays that remained to call and say good-bye to Mrs. Batt, and Mrs. and Miss Jenkins.

I found the inmates of the Rectory sad enough. Mrs. Jenkins sat by the fire in her old place; opposite to her was the empty chair. The poor crippled Geoffrey lay as usual on his sofa by the window, reading. Tears sprung to my eyes as I looked at them both, and thought how soon he would have no sofa to lie on.

Harriet was making an inventory of the furniture, preparatory to the sale.

She was doing it with an unmoved countenance, as a matter of course. They had all made up their minds to the necessity long since, but I could scarcely restrain myself from sobbing aloud, as I thought of all these familiar objects passing away from them into the hands of strangers.

I have heard my aunt Joan say she had no sympathy with people who attached themselves to furniture ; she liked persons. To me there is something pleasant and sacred in the well-known aspect of my home. I should not like new furniture as well as these tables, and chairs, and sofas, where my husband and I have sat so long, and around which our children played.

Probably the same associations and feelings affected Mrs. Jenkins, but she did not give them vent.

She sat pale and grave, looking every now and then at the vacant chair. Her manner seemed to say, "I am old, and have but a year or two, at most, to live. The companion and friend of my life is gone from me, and what matter a few comforts more or less for the short time I have to live ?"

"Sit down, my dear," she said to me. "I am very glad to see you ; I wanted to see you, to thank you for your gift."

"Do not speak of it, dear Mrs. Jenkins. I wish it had been more."

"It was much, Elizabeth," she replied—"much to us, who are very poor. It does not matter to me, but I grieve for Geoffrey."

"I shall do, mother, never fear. I shall get one or two young men to come and read with me. I am sure my old Durham masters will recommend pupils to me. I have not strength to turn schoolmaster, but I could knock Latin and Greek into their heads for two or three hours every day." Then, changing the conversation, he turned to me and said, "I wanted to thank you too, Miss Neville; your kindness did my mother more good than your gift. It is pleasant in one's misfortunes to feel that one is not forgotten."

"I should have been very ungrateful to have forgotten the kindness your mother and sister showed me, who was an entire stranger to them. Did I not come here to be nursed after my illness, to say nothing of other kindnesses?"

"Ay," said Mrs. Jenkins, with a touch of true housekeeping pride, "and you used to like our wine-jelly, and say it was better than what the housekeeper made at White Cross."

"So it was," answered I—"much better. I never tasted any so good before."

"Ah! my dear, it is not everybody that has

that receipt. I never would give it—but I will give it you before I go away. Perhaps you may marry, and have a house of your own some day, and then it will be useful to you. I was always celebrated for that jelly—and when you make it, you will think of me."

Harriet put down her inventory, and came and sat by me. "You were not the only Good Samaritan, Lizzy. Doctor Batt refused to send in his bill, and he gave mamma ten pounds, telling her he should consider himself her landlord for two years. Was it not noble in him ? "

"Very," I replied—"for he has a large family ; but he has been your doctor long, and I daresay had pleasure in proving his regard for you all."

"I think so," said Mrs. Jenkins. "Dr. Batt is a good man, and God will repay him. There is a blessing upon those who visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and keep themselves unspotted from the world. I believe Dr. Batt does both, my dear ; I think he is more truly religious than your pious Tanners."

"I think so too," said I, abruptly. In my heart I thought of the Pharisee who passed by the wounded man, but I would not speak ill of my employers.

Geoffrey put his hand upon the bible that lay beside him, and read aloud the parable of Him "who fell among thieves, who stripped him of

his raiment, and wounded him, leaving him half dead." "Confess, Miss Neville," said he, "that you were thinking of the Pharisee and Levite in that parable? My father held this living for fifty years, and knew Sir James Tanner as a boy —yet in our affliction he never came forward to help us."

"We had no claim on him, my dear," said the mother. "We were never very intimate; and in former times your brothers annoyed him by killing his game."

"That is no excuse for him," returned Geoffrey; "my brothers were headstrong boys, whose conduct my father never sanctioned. You have often been guests at his table since then. Had you not been, you would not have met Miss Neville. And I think that the aged widow of an old clergyman, whom they visited, had, in her extreme need, a strong claim upon the benevolence of a wealthy family living close to her. Had they chosen, they could have assisted my mother greatly. They passed by on the other side. They have not even called to express their sympathy in her bereavement."

I had not a word of exculpation to offer. I knew there were alms-houses for the widows of clergymen—charities which granted them small pensions—with all of which the influence of a man in Sir James Tanner's position would have

been great. I knew they could well have afforded to give help themselves. I held my peace. They had passed by on the other side.

The cat which had been lying on the hearth-rug now suddenly jumped into the vacant chair. Mrs. Jenkins quietly got up and took her off. "Not there, pussy," said she, reseating herself, with the animal on her lap. "We are going to take Tabby o' Nigger with us, Miss Neville ; she will be a remembrance of our home. We shall be lonely sometimes, Geoffrey and I, and her gambols will amuse us."

"Mamma will have it so," said Harriet, looking at me. "I wanted to break my marriage off, and go with them to Durham, but neither of them would hear of it."

"To be sure not," answered Mrs. Jenkins. "I am seventy-two ; I have not long to live. It is an unspeakable comfort to me to know that Harriet will not be left unprotected, but that she has a protector and friend. That thought was the only thing that gave my poor husband any earthly comfort on his death-bed. It would break my heart entirely if Harriet broke off her marriage."

The old lady began to cry. I saw at once that Harriet had no voice in the matter.

"You see, Lizzie," said she, "it is not a love-match on either side. I am not young ; Mr.

Robson is a widower. He wanted a kindly woman, who would be a mother to his little girl. He is a sensible, good man. I had no other attachment; and when he asked me to be his wife, I did not foresee all that has happened. I hoped that I should have a little money, and Mamma also; and we agreed that she and Geoffrey should reside with us. When poor Papa lost all his savings, I wrote and told Mr. Robson of our misfortune, and said that I thought, under the circumstances, our marriage had better not take place. He came down to the Rectory at once, with the letter in his hand, and told my father and mother that my want of all means of subsistence rendered it more necessary that I should accept the home and protection he could offer me. They thought his conduct so disinterested that they became still more anxious for the match; and, to please my mother, I am to be married as soon as I have settled her and Geoffrey in their new home."

I told them that I also was going to leave White Cross, and then I bade them farewell.

In those days letters were expensive; therefore I kept up no correspondence with the Jenkins after I quitted the Priory. They did not ask me to write to them, and we never met again. But I heard that, as I had foreseen, the privation of all the comforts they had been used

to shortened the life of the old mother and her crippled son. Benjamin Jenkins behaved kindly and generously—he allowed his mother a hundred a year as soon as he heard of his father's death and the family misfortunes. But it came too late; after exposure to draught, cold, and damp—after hard living and hard fare had prepared their weak bodies for death. Geoffrey toiled nobly and manfully to support his mother, by giving a few lessons to some of the neighbouring gentlemen's sons in Greek, Latin, and mathematics. He had taken a “double first” at Oxford, and was well recommended; and they did not mind the fact that he lived in a brick-floored cottage. Neither he nor his mother would hear of taking a better one, the rent of which, they said, they might never be able to pay, since their very subsistence depended upon the chance gifts of friends, and what Geoffrey earned by taking pupils—a source of income that his feeble and precarious health rendered very uncertain. He lingered two years. Long enough to suffer much, in all ways; and long enough to know that Ben would provide for his mother. The remittance of fifty pounds, which he sent instantly on hearing of his father's death, served to provide a few comforts for Geoffrey's last illness, and to bury him. Harriet was with him in his supreme hour.

The last day he had lain quiet for a long time, with his eyes closed, as if in sleep.

He opened them, gazed on the bare whitewashed walls, and the poor furniture, and then on his mother's wan form. He looked long at her, and sighed, then he pressed Harriet's hand, and said with a smile, "It is all over now—there is no more sorrow!" turned his face to the wall, and died. After the funeral was over Harriet took her mother home. But for the fifty pounds Ben had promised to send the following half-year, the independent-spirited old woman would not have brooked the idea of being a burden upon her poor son-in-law; "he had done enough," she said, "in taking Harriet as it was."

One morning Harriet carried her breakfast to her in bed, where she usually took it, and found her dead. She had died in sleep.

When I heard this sad story of my former friendly acquaintance, I could not forbear thinking that a small subscription, such as the Miss Tanners were perpetually raising for rebuilding churches, or establishing schools, would have saved all this pain and suffering. As Miss Lucilla had said they must—"they had got on somehow," but it had cost them their lives. I could not think that the man with ten thousand a-year was justified in withholding help from

his necessitous brethren, any more than Dives in our Lord's parable.

I heard all these particulars from Mrs. Batt, with whom Harriet corresponded, and through whom I had more than once sent my mite. I have related the fate of the Jenkins family now, instead of in the proper time and place, because, as I never saw any of them again, they ceased in any way to be connected with my own history.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON my return from the Rectory I found Miss Wroughton had arrived. It is said few people like those who are to succeed them in office. My future successor did not please me. She was an insignificant-looking woman, of about eight and twenty years of age. Her features were large and coarse; and she had oily-black hair, braided above a forehead expressive of low cunning. Every feature had a demure, sanctified look, and the sly small black eyes seldom looked direct at you. There was a cringing obsequiousness in her manner to Lady Tanner and her elder daughters, that disgusted me. She seemed from her conversation to value only two things in the world — great people, and what she called “religion.” Her language was good, her voice well-toned, yet she struck me as being underbred and vulgar.

On Sunday we all walked together to church,

and she edified Miss Agatha and myself by complaining of the great privation she had undergone in a former situation, from having to “sit under a minister who did not preach pure gospel.”

Had I never mixed among the class of persons whom sinners like myself denominate “the saintly,” I should have been at a loss to understand her, and supposed that he interpolated matter of his own with the text of the Bible, or chose the subject of his discourse from the Talmud or Koran; as it was, I understood her to mean that he did not hold precisely the same views as herself; and, in particular, that he insisted upon self-denial, just dealing in word and deed, sympathy for others, and liberality in alms-giving—in all which he closely followed his model, Christ.

Your saints like generalities, touching on no peculiar sin, and dwelling everlastingly upon faith, as the one thing needful; far better than discourses inculcating Christian virtues, in which their consciences tell them they are terribly deficient.

Miss Wroughton said that after a few months she could endure such soul-famishing no longer—and therefore wrote to consult Lady Daventry—“who,” she said, “is a most pious woman, and takes an interest even in so humble a person as

myself—whether it would not be my duty to leave a situation where I could not sit under a gospel minister? Her ladyship was kind enough to interest herself in procuring me another; and it was through her recommendation I went to Mrs. Trevennan."

" You were quite right," said Miss Agatha, gravely, " to prefer your spiritual improvement to every worldly consideration of profit; and you see you were not allowed to suffer from doing right—for your leaving that situation, from such right motives, led eventually to your coming here."

" For which I can never be sufficiently thankful," said Miss Wroughton. " Dear Miss Agatha, I do indeed feel it a privilege to live in a family who seek after righteousness."

More of the conversation I did not hear, for I walked on, and joined two of my pupils. I shall merely, therefore, observe, *en passant*, that I knew, on good authority, that, at the Hemings', Miss Wroughton had a very small salary and an uncomfortable home, and therefore she had not any very great merit in resigning that situation. The basing her reason for quitting it on the want of gospel ministry, was just one of the hypocritical manœuvres common to her sect. She knew that by doing so she would bind Lady Daventry to exert herself to procure a better for this "sufferer for righteousness's sake."

Knowing all this, I had not patience to listen. The remainder of the day passed in discussing the two sermons we had heard, and reading good books; and the more I heard of Miss Wroughton's opinions and conversation, the more I felt disposed to agree with the Tanners and herself, that her "coming to White Cross was quite a providential dispensation." They evidently considered that they had made a good exchange in replacing me by so pious a young person.

But we parted in the most friendly manner. Lady Tanner told me she should always be willing to bear testimony to the faithfulness with which I had fulfilled my duties, and wished me well; Miss Tanner, Miss Matilda Tanner, and Miss Lucilla said the same. Miss Agatha—who, being a year younger than myself, had thought it incumbent upon her to be particularly interested in my mental and religious improvement—expressed a wish to hear occasionally—from time to time—of my welfare; "hoped that, as years passed on, I should think less of this life, and more of eternity;" and presented me with a volume of sermons, from "the perusal of which," she assured me, "I could not fail to derive the greatest benefit, as they showed so beautifully the utter nothingness of the fleeting riches and pleasures of this world."

I could not help thinking that everyone of the

Tanners was far more worldly than I was myself; but I make it a rule never to reject kindness. I saw Miss Agatha was sincere in her good wishes, and therefore I thanked her for her gift, and promised I would write to her when I was fairly settled in my new situation.

“Enfin vous vous en allez, et moi j'y reste dans cette maudite maison. Vous etiez triste comme toutes les Anglaises, mais, pour cette demoiselle Ro-ton, elle m'ennuie à mourir. Mademoiselle Neville, portez vous bien, et que la maison ou vous devez entrer, soit plus gaie que celle-ci,” was the adieu of the head-governess.

I had always been on good terms with Madame St. Croix. I expected she would at least have expressed regret at my departure, and felt rather hurt at so cold a farewell.

We had, while together, mutually endeavoured to improve each other. I had given her lessons in English, to prepare her for teaching it in Paris; she had instructed me in French and music. After three years of daily intercourse and exchange of good offices, I felt angry that she should part from me as if I had been a three-days' acquaintance. It was folly; I might as well have expected warmth from dead touch-wood—which, indeed, glows brightly in the dark, but sends out no heat—as from a cold, selfish heart.

My pupils shook hands with me, and just touched my cheek. They also preferred Miss Wroughton.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON arriving at Hilton I found my dear old aunts in good health, and they seemed pleased to see me again.

The three years that had elapsed had left few traces upon either. They appeared to me to resemble those fine old ruins, over which increasing age sheds a tenderer, mellower charm. The perfect building could scarcely have been more beautiful than it is in its decay—festooned by ivy, tapestried by moss and pellitory, crowned with balmy-scented wall-flowers, enriched in colouring even by the very time-stains, which tell of years and hardships.

My aunt Joan was absent. There was nothing to damp my pleasure in revisiting my old home.

I went with aunt Theodosia to call on all my former village friends, from the Beauchamps down to the Jones—none of them had forgotten me; and I had real pleasure in seeing those who

had been the kind friends of my childhood once more.

We resumed, too, our former habit of taking long country strolls. Though she was seventy, my aunt Theodosia had neither lost her love of nature nor her bodily activity.

In these walks I learnt more of the family history than I had ever known before. Formerly I was considered a child, and admitted only to the outer court of the temple; now the sanctuary and its mysteries were revealed to me. When a child I had felt only fear, and of late years love; I now learned to feel reverence.

I one day asked my aunt Theodosia how it happened that so beautiful a woman as my aunt Diana had never married.

"Your grandfather, my dear," she replied, "married twice. Diana and I were girls of eleven when he brought home his second wife. We dreaded her coming above all things; but she proved a kind and gentle mother to us.

"We were growing up wild, uneducated, ill-mannered girls; we owe her everything.

"She bore my father many children; but none lived for a long time. The loss of her babies, and what she underwent in her confinements, weakened our dear mother's health greatly; and when your father was born and thrived, she used to say she feared she should never live to

see him grown up, and that one of us must be a mother to him. I became engaged to be married a short time before your aunt Joan's birth.

"Before my mother had recovered from this last confinement my poor father was one day brought home a corpse. Unhappily, my mother was sitting at the window, and saw the lifeless body of her husband carried to the house—she rushed downstairs and met it in the hall—the shock killed her.

"But before she died she made your aunt Diana promise to take charge of her children. Diana hides very violent feelings under that cold, stern manner; and we both passionately loved our gentle mother. She threw herself on her knees by the bedside, and solemnly vowed before God to be a parent to them. She has nobly kept her vow.

"I daresay, Lizzie, that when you were a child you used to think her harsh and stern. She is. She ruthlessly and pitilessly crushed down her own hopes, and sacrificed the happiness of her life to a sense of duty; and then a kind of frost seemed to come over her manners. She grew cold and stern. I suppose, in the endeavour to curb that passionate heart."

"Was she engaged too, then?" I asked.

"Not engaged, but attached. She had been

so for years. After my father's death the man she loved asked her to be his wife. She said she would, on one condition—that his house should be a home for her little brother and sister so long as they wanted one—till your father was old enough to enter a profession, and till Joan married. Mr. Vavasour refused. He said that he wished to marry *her*, not her whole family; and suggested that her step-mother's children had better be sent to their own relations. Diana asked what relations were so near as a sister? ‘A *half*-sister,’ said he. ‘Their mother was a *whole* mother to me,’ said Diana, ‘and I will be a *whole* sister to them. I promised my dear mother, on her death-bed, to be a parent to them, and I will keep my word.’ He said, ‘she could not love him much, if she would give him up, sooner than her half-brother and sister.’ And they parted in anger.

“Afterwards he repented, and wrote to say she should have her way; but she had taken her determination. She said he had shown what his true character was; and if she married him he would, probably, treat the children unkindly. She wrote him her decision, and refused to have any further correspondence with him. This great grief altered her completely. What grieved her most was her disappointment in Mr. Vavasour’s character. She had looked up to him as

so noble-minded and good ; and now she despised him, for he was very rich, and the support of two children could have been no burden to him. She hardened herself against her own sorrow, and thus she grew hard to others. She was stern and harsh even with the children for whom she had sacrificed so much. Neither your father nor your aunt Joan had a happy childhood. I am sure Joan did not love her then ; but when she became old enough to know all her sister had given up for her sake and Robert's, then love came. Gratitude attached her strongly to your aunt Diana, and she determined to devote her life to repaying her for what she had suffered.

“ Your father chose his profession and left us. Diana centred her whole love upon Joan. She may be said almost to worship the very ground she treads on. What Joan says or does *must* be right. The most perfect confidence has reigned between them ever since Joan grew up and knew the history of the past. Diana, too, is very different to what she was when she was thirty. She is one of those few characters who, like strong wine, improve by age. Every year softens and refines her.”

This little narrative gave me much to think of. I had long known my aunt Theodosia's history. She was engaged to be married, the

wedding-clothes were made, the day fixed. The intended bridegroom took a journey on important business, caught a fever, and was dead and buried before she even heard of his illness. She never recovered her spirits, or went into the world again, but wore black for him to her dying day.

I had heard the tale again and again from my aunt Joan, who scorned her for still lamenting, in her old age, the lover of her youth ; and said it was deplorable weakness for any one so to waste life in regrets. For my part, I had always tenderly loved my gentle, pensive aunt—perhaps the more for this tinge of romance in her disposition. A love story always interests the young. Now I was older I felt more disposed to agree with my aunt Joan. It was a heavy affliction, but it came direct from the hand of God. There was no bitterness in it, as there is when the trust and confidence of years is broken up, and the reed we have leaned upon snaps and pierces—oh! not *our hand!* but *our heart's core*, when the prop and stay of our life suddenly gives way. To the one, memory can look back athwart the wastes of life, as to a green and grassy spot beside a clear stream, enamelled by bright, fragrant scented flowers, overshadowed by stately trees, in whose branches birds sang, as to us on earth they will

never sing again ; for we hear them no more with the young joyful heart. Over the other a scorching fire seems to have passed, leaving nothing but blackness and darkness behind it ; and yet—there also, after long years, grass and sweet-scented flowers spring up. I said to myself, no grief is immortal. It is better to bury one's dead, as Jacob did on the way to Ephrath, and to journey on.

It was a pleasant meeting that I had with young Lady Beauchamp. Tears came into my eyes when I folded her in my arms. I understood then something of the love my aunt Diana felt for my aunt Joan. I looked upon Georgiana's good humour, pleasant manners, and accomplishments as in part my work ; I had laid the foundation for all her present happiness. I even took credit to myself for her beauty. Who ever thought or called her handsome before I went to Weston ? I held her off at arm's length, and said I must admire her. She laughed, and told me “I might admire her as much as I chose.”

“ But *I* do not say so,” said Melusina ; “ I think it high time you turned from her to an older friend still.”

“ Forgive me, Melusina,” I answered, “ I have seen you and Anne often lately, but you know it is more than three years since I saw

Georgiana. At first sight I should hardly have known Georgiana Stanley in this dashing lady ; now I look at her, it is the old face still."

" See," said Georgiana, with mock anger, " she has not forgotten all my misdeeds—how I went about with unkempt hair, and broken sandals, and sometimes a torn frock to boot : she tells me to my face she did not think that grim-looking grub would ever have unfolded to be such a gay-painted butterfly. Tell me, Mrs. Neville, did not Lizzie give a very bad account of me ?"

" Not very, Lady Beauchamp," said my aunt, putting on her spectacles to gaze on the handsome young woman, who had playfully knelt down before her on her footstool—" not very ; she said you were a little unmanageable, that was all. Most girls are ; and, Georgie, I do not love your yea-nay young ladies. It takes some spirit to battle with the storms of life ; and they are seldom capable of much love or much endeavour. Lizzie had plenty of mettle herself. My dear, you have a good and bonnie face ; an old woman gives you her blessing."

She laid her hand upon the young wife's head, who bent it with graceful reverence, and, rising up, gave her an affectionate kiss.

Afterwards, to please her, she sat down to the piano, and sang some of her finest airs.

"I like your Georgiana, Lizzie," said aunt Diana, after the Beauchamp party had departed; "she is handsome—almost beautiful. She has a good heart. She can sit down as willingly to sing for an old woman of eighty as for a crowd of admirers; she has a reverence for age. She will make Sir Harry a good wife, and her children will rise up and call her blessed."

Always prompt in seeing what would benefit others, and zealous in doing kindness, Georgiana Beauchamp thought it would serve my interests, and place me on higher ground with the Trevors, if she invited them to meet me at Beauchamp Abbey, and she sent me an invitation.

I was a good deal disappointed in Mr. Trevor. From his conduct in regard to my salary, I had judged him to be liberal—I now found him to be merely ostentatious. He gave the twenty guineas, which were not pressed for—not to the deserving governess, but to Lady Beauchamp's relation; not because he was really generous, but because he wished her to think him so.

Like most north-country men, he was very tall—I should think six feet two in height. He had been very handsome; he had a fine figure still. His features were cast in the Norman type—that is to say, strongly aquiline; and he had great flashing eagle eyes beneath his broad and remarkably arched eyebrows. His counte-

nance did not please me. It struck me as conveying a feeling of intense haughtiness, mingled with cunning. He was not a man in whom I should have put implicit trust, like Mr. Stanley or Sir Harry Beauchamp.

He had the graceful ease of movement which marks the gentleman, was evidently a man of sense and observation, and well-read ; had travelled much, and reflected upon what he had seen, and his conversation was at once instructive and amusing ; but all these good qualities were marred and spoiled by a pompous ostentation of manner, an evident desire to be thought much of, which struck me as singular in a person of his birth and station.

He reminded me—in the way he boasted of the schools he had built for his poor, the charities he had established in his parish, his desire to do good, his Hebrew and Biblical researches, the sermons he had written, and the religious treatises he had published—of nothing so much as a draper shewing off his goods.

“ Do look at that shawl, ma’am—hold it up to the light, it will bear examination ; admire the beauty of the design, the delicacy of the workmanship ; that satin I can sell you for less than it cost ; it is an unequalled piece of goods ; look at the texture, you can tumble it up like a pocket-handkerchief, yet it will not crease. No

Genoa velvet ever yet made surpasses this one, in softness and richness of colour,"—as if he doubted whether the articles were of a quality to recommend themselves.

Other men would have spoken of what they had done, and were doing, in the natural course of conversation; but Mr. Trevor's self-commendation — for I can call it nothing else — did not arise naturally from the subjects in hand; he forced and turned the conversation perpetually, to shew how good, how clever, and how much to be esteemed and admired he was.

He was so perpetually calling every one's attention to his piety and goodness, that I set him down internally as having neither.

Georgiana and Melusina came to the same conclusion.

"I hate that pompous, boasting man!" was their first exclamation when we talked the Trevors over on the evening of their arrival in Lady Beauchamp's dressing-room, as we curled our hair before going to bed—that favourite time for telling secrets and retailing scandal.

Mrs. Trevor we all liked; she was very lady-like, very pleasing and pretty still; but she, too, had a peculiarity. Why was Mr. Trevor's wife so very humble, so fearful to offend, so timidly anxious to agree with every one? We attributed it to shyness—a shyness that was absolutely

painful to witness, and which made her blush and tremble like a girl, and apparently drew on her the displeasure of her ostentatious husband.

The day after their arrival, “the dressed day” of Yorkshire visiting, there was a large party at dinner. Some of the guests had lately returned from a tour in Italy, and much of the conversation turned upon foreign scenes and manners. Why did Mrs. Trevor first turn pale, and then colour up to the temples, when Sir Harry addressed this simple question to her :

“ Were you ever at the Baths of Lucca, Mrs. Trevor ? ”

I was sitting close beside her, and turning, as Sir Harry spoke, I saw her absolutely tremble with agitation, and I pitied the intense shyness which made it seem as painful to her to be addressed from the bottom of the long table, as to a young girl just come out, who expected that the sound of her name would make everybody look up from their plates, and stare at her. It did, in fact, for she hesitated so long, that Sir Harry repeated his question. When she saw all eyes upon her, she became still more confused, and was only recalled to herself by Mr. Trevor’s measured accents :

“ Sibylla, my dear, did you not hear Sir Harry’s questions ? ”

Why—I cannot say—but it struck me there

was a warning in these simple words, or rather in their tone.

She replied, in a tremulous voice, “I—I think I have been there. I was very young when I left Italy—I forget all about it.”

“Then you must go there again, to refresh your memory,” said Sir Harry, who, occupied in carving a spring chicken, did not perceive her emotion; “Georgiana and I think of taking a tour there this autumn—perhaps we may meet you.”

“I am afraid not,” replied the sonorous voice of the Rector of Trevor-Court; “we clergymen are too closely tied to our cures to have time for such indulgences, otherwise few things would give me greater pleasure. I went ‘the grand tour,’ as our forefathers called it, before I was ordained. Since I married, and settled down at Trevor-Court, I have never been absent for more than a few weeks at a time. I deem it a duty to devote my life to the profession I have chosen—my days are not my own, to spend in amusement, however innocent, or I should greatly enjoy another trip to the continent. By the way, what do you think of continental politics just now, Sir Harry?”

After fox-hunting, politics appear to me to be the most engrossing of subjects to country gentlemen. I had heard Sir Harry in former days

talk on the first subject with unabated interest for a whole evening ; he now plunged into a discussion, in which all the gentlemen present joined, and in which I shall not attempt to follow him.

In person Mrs. Trevor was, as is usual, the reverse of her lord. He was tall, she was little ; he was dark, she was dazzlingly fair. Her features were small, regular, and delicate—too delicate for robust health ; she was not thin, but her face had a sharpness of outline which was not a sign of health. Her colour went and came continually ; the least sound made her start ; the opening of a door suddenly threw her into a tremor ; if any one addressed her unexpectedly, she trembled and turned pale. In addressing people she generally avoided looking at them ; when you did encounter her glances there was a furtive, fearful look in those soft blue eyes, that I never saw in any human being before. Her manner was subdued and humble—she seemed hardly to dare to express an opinion of her own—and her very voice had an imploring accent, as if she were entreating you not to be harsh with her.

Strangers seemed to be her especial dread. I shall never forget the startled look in her eyes, the death-like paleness that replaced her usual delicate and varying colour, when Harrison

threw open the library door one morning, and announced “Lord and Lady Fitz-Walter.”

Recovering herself as if by an effort, she glanced hurriedly and fearfully round, as if meditating an escape from the room; a violent and evidently painful blush suffused her face, her mouth twitched nervously, her hands shook so much that she dropped the needle from her work, and had to stop and look for it.

“What have you lost, Sibylla? Your needle? —let me help you,” said Mr. Trevor, in the low, peculiar, warning tone I had once before remarked, as he stooped and looked for the missing needle.

Thus put on her guard, Mrs. Trevor endeavoured to compose herself, and remained quietly seated. I am sure she had been intending to leave the drawing-room when her husband spoke.

“I think I had the pleasure of meeting you in Italy Mrs. Trevor,” said Lady Fitz-Walter.

“Hardly, I think,” replied the Rector, interposing. “It must have been the wife of my eldest brother, Mrs. Trevor of Trevor-Court; we poor country parsons have not the means, nor can we conscientiously spend our time in a foreign country. I have been a fixture ever since my marriage; but my brother and his wife are great travellers.”

"Ah! then it must have been them that I met. She was a Miss Needham, I remember," said Lady Fitz-Walter—who had in truth no very definite recollections on the subject, and only meant to do the civil, and have something to say to Mrs. Trevor.

"She was," answered the Rector.

"I hope she is quite well."

"Quite, I thank you. She and my brother are now at Rome." Soon afterwards the Fitz-Walters took their leave, and the expression of relief that came over Mrs. Trevor's countenance was remarkable. It struck us all.

The Trevors stayed a week at Beauchamp Abbey, during which time Georgiana one day drove them over to Hilton, to introduce them to my relatives. Melusina and I accompanied them. It was good policy. No one could avoid being impressed with respect by the venerable appearance of my aunt Diana, or fail to be attracted by the subdued pensive manners of my gentle aunt Theodosia. Gentlewoman was stamped upon both of them. It was evident at the first glance that they had passed their lives in good society.

Besides this, their house was large and handsome, their drawing-room lofty and spacious; and though the furniture was neither new fashioned, nor very comfortable-looking—though

the whole room wanted that air of luxury which belongs to this age—there were no signs of poverty about it, but rather the reverse. Costly Indian cabinets, huge China jars and monsters, and various other heirlooms, were ranged, with their usual precision, on the top of the long low bookcases, which ran along two sides of the room, and filled the recesses of two of the windows. Mr. Trevor was a connoisseur in old china, and he won my aunt Theodosia's heart by admiring a thick, hideous, huge saucer, with a blue mare and foal upon it, which was the treasure of her collection, and my especial aversion, though I never dared say so. He was enraptured with an invaluable teapot, that looked as if it was made of sandstone, daubed over with round spots of red paint; and went into ecstasies at the sight of two dragons, of the true, rare, and peculiar Chinese green.

He won my good old aunt's heart so completely, she actually presented him with a very curious-shaped cup and saucer, certainly never meant to drink out of—which he received with great gratitude, and assured her should have an honourable place in his collection.

When luncheon was served, Mr. Trevor did not forget to notice the antique silver goblets, handed on an antique silver waiter by the butler; nor the valuable old-fashioned cut-glass water-jug,

with a rose on one side and a canary bird on the other ; nor the silver-hafted knives, with the crest of Sir Henry Beauchamp, my great-grandfather, upon them. I heard him say afterwards to Lady Beauchamp, in a tone of voice not meant for my ears, “I wonder, Lady Beauchamp, why Miss Neville goes out as a governess at all. There are no signs of poverty about her aunts’ establishment ; everything, though stiff and old-fashioned, was in very good style.”

“It is not from poverty, Mr. Trevor,” replied Melusina. “I have known the Nevilles, who are our relations, from my childhood. I often stay there. Go when you will, you will always find everything as you saw it to-day ; there is no dressing for visitors. They keep an establishment of servants, and live with every possible comfort. But Mrs. Neville is rather strict and stern, though her manners soften every year as she gets older ; and Miss Neville—Joan—whom you have not seen, is a clever, agreeable woman, but of a very arbitrary disposition. They kept Lizzie too close, allowed her no pleasures, dressed her in a way that made her a public laughing-stock, by way of humbling her pride—and, in short, drew the cord too tight and snapped the bow.”

“A common result,” observed Mr. Trevor.

“And so,” said Lady Beauchamp, “Lizzie

says she prefers earning an independence for herself. She loves her old aunts dearly, but she does not like to reside constantly with them."

"I can fancy that," said Mr. Trevor; "most single women are rather captious and difficult to please. I think she judged rightly."

Mr. Trevor, like most of his sex, hated old maids, and never lost an opportunity of inveighing against them.

"You must make an exception in favour of aunt Theodosia," remarked Melusina; "she is the gentlest of human beings. Poor thing! she was about to be married, and the young man was taken suddenly ill, and died. Aunt Theodosia wore widow's mourning for him; and, as you see, she is in black to this day, and she would never listen to any other lover."

"I honour her!" exclaimed Mr. Trevor, examining his cup and saucer critically; "but why do you call her your aunt? Is she so?"

"Not really—her kindly manners have won her that appellation. All the children in the neighbourhood call her 'Aunt Theodosia,' or 'Aunt The.' I have called her so ever since she gave me comfits and picture-books."

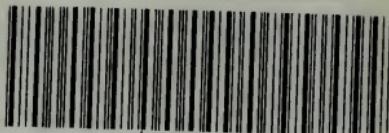
"And I," said Lady Beauchamp, "consider her an aunt by marriage. Indeed, when I reflect on it, I feel it an injury not to have had a niece's share of those same comfits and picture-books.

To make amends for it, she has promised to leave me those two green monsters, and that ivory and ebony cabinet, by will. Dear little auntie! I hope it will be many years before I get them!"

In the evening Mr. Trevor expressed to me how highly he had been gratified by his introduction to two such perfect old ladies as my aunts, and his sense of his own good fortune in obtaining a young lady like myself as his only daughter's governess. To see her such a woman as Lady Beauchamp, was, he said, the dearest wish of his heart. He hoped our connection would last until Ellen was grown up, and expressed a wish that I might find Trevor-Court Rectory a home. He then fixed the day for my going there.

END OF VOL. I.

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